

Thousands leave Baghdad to celebrate Newroz

AL MADAIN (AFP) — Tens of thousands of Baghdadis streamed out to this resort town 30 kilometres south of the capital Saturday to celebrate the Kurdish New Year.

The festival, known as Newroz in Kurdish, is a public holiday throughout Iraq, and Arabs outnumbered Kurds among the holiday revellers.

The holiday traffic clogged the roads out of the capital with people crammed into cars and buses worn out by years without spare parts.

Picnickers played football and badminton among the ruins of the classical city of Ctesiphon as busking musicians played traditional Kurdish dances.

Children clambered over the third-century Great Arch of Ctesiphon, claimed to be the largest single-span brick arch in the world, as families danced in the park.

"The whole family comes here every year to dance and have a picnic," said Ahmad Seremeri, a Kurd whose family originally comes from the mainly-Kurdish town of Khanaqin near the Iranian border but now lives in the capital.

"It's a chance to meet friends and other people from Khanaqin," said his brother Mohammad.

But their mother bemoaned the fact that they could no longer afford to travel to the mainly-Kurdish north to celebrate the New Year as they had in years gone by.

The impact of U.N. sanctions on the family's purchasing power meant they had to celebrate the festival somewhere closer to home.

Khanaqin is controlled by the Iraqi government but many other Kurdish areas of northern Iraq have escaped Baghdad's control since Western governments inter-

18 injured in Kurdish new year demonstration in Turkey

DIYARBAKIR (AFP) — Eighteen people, mainly Kurdish protesters, were injured Saturday when a crowd celebrating the Kurdish new year Newroz clashed with Turkish police in the country's troubled south-east, local journalists said.

The clash broke out in the town of Van near the Iranian border when some demonstrators hurled stones at police, who responded by beating up several protesters, the journalists told AFP.

Fifteen Kurdish protesters and three police officers were injured, but none was reported to be in serious condition. The demonstration was organised by the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party.

Scores of protesters were arrested, the journalists said. Newroz, which each year is celebrated on Mar. 21 by many Middle Eastern peoples,

including Kurds, became the symbol of a separatist Kurdish insurgency in Turkey's south-east in the early 1990s.

Scores of Kurdish demonstrators were killed by police fire in several south-eastern towns in Turkey's bloodiest Newroz incidents in 1992. But in recent years, Newroz demonstrations have been mostly peaceful.

Newroz was celebrated under strict security measures in several cities and towns throughout the country Saturday. There were no other reports of violence.

The Turkish government has in the last few years been encouraging Newroz celebrations by state organisations, saying the day is also important in the Turkish culture.

People's Democracy Party officials have denounced the government, accusing it of trying to cleanse Newroz of its Kurdish character.

vened to stop it suppressing a Kurdish uprising following the 1991 Gulf War.

Kurdish workers from the northern areas still manage to cross to government-held

areas to jobs in the capital and the second city of Mosul.

But drivers at the capital's An-Nahda bus station said the effect of heavy rain on

the roads in the run-up to the Kurdish New Year had prevented them returning to their families in the north to celebrate the festival there this year.



SABAEANS SLAUGHTER SHEEP: Iraqi Sabaeans sect members Saturday slaughter a sheep as a gift for the gods during a ritual on the Tigris River in Baghdad. After any killing a Sabaeans must ask forgiveness, preferably through baptism by a priest in water. Around 100,000 members of Iraq's secretive sect have changed many of their ways but still keep the core of their centuries-old religious rituals intact. The sect, which traces its roots to John the Baptist, was founded in Palestine in the first two centuries after Christ's death but members had to flee to Yemen and from there emigrated to Mesopotamia (Reuters photo)

Awqaf ministry finalises haj preparations in Medina

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Saturday announced that it has finalised preparations in the Saudi city of Medina to receive Jordanian pilgrims performing this year's pilgrimage to Mecca.

Nasri Tubeishat, assistant head of the ministry's mission accompanying the pilgrims, said the first convoy of vehicles carrying Jordanian pilgrims is due Monday in Medina.

Mr. Tubeishat said the ministry has taken the necessary measures to provide the pilgrims with required services and to offer them accommodation in Medina before continuing their trip to Mecca.

He said the ministry's teams were coordinating transportation procedures with the companies to carry the pilgrims to various religious and holy places.

The ministry's mission is supervising the transportation and accommodation of the pilgrims and has assigned a guide for each bus load of pilgrims to advise them on the manner of performing the haj (pilgrimage), he added.

According to Mr. Tubeishat, Arab Israeli Muslims had earlier arrived in Medina and will be transported to Mecca on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health and Medical Care announced Saturday that its medical mission has left for Saudi Arabia to offer medical treatment to pilgrims.

Acting Minister of Health and Medical Care Mohammad Mamser and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi said the team members will accompany the pilgrims throughout their visit to the holy places to offer medical treatment when needed.

According to Jaafar Huneiti, head of the medical team, the mission comprises 47 doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other officials fully supplied with medical supplies.

He said the mission, which has three fully equipped ambulances at its disposal, plans to open three health centres in Medina and three others in Mecca. Dr. Huneiti noted that ambulances will also be at the service of the Muslim pilgrims from Israel.

The pilgrimage reaches its peak with the final religious ceremonies leading up to Al Adha Feast (feast of sacrifice), expected on April 7.

New civil marriage bill comes under fire in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — A government bill to allow voluntary civil marriage in Lebanon has sparked a public outcry, with senior Muslim and Christian clerics as well as Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri condemning the proposals.

"We will never accept this issue under any situation and this [position] is final," said Sheikh Mohammad Rashid Qabbani, mufi (spiritual leader) of the Sunni Muslim community.

"We will join efforts with all the heads of the Christian and Muslim communities to confront this dangerous precedent in the history of Lebanon," Sheikh Qabbani said Thursday after a trip to Saudi Arabia.

In a surprise move earlier this week, the Lebanese cabinet approved a bill put forward by Lebanese President Elias Hrawi, a Maronite Christian, to allow civil marriage ceremonies in the country.

A total of 21 out of 30 cabinet

ministers backed the draft bill on Wednesday, but the text must still be approved by the parliament before it becomes law and it is currently drawing fire from the across the religious spectrum.

Sheikh Mohammad Mehdi Shamseddine, head of the Higher Shiite Council which is the official authority of the Shiite Muslim community, told AFP the proposal "opens the way to a new problem."

Most Beirut newspapers expected opposition to civil marriages to dominate sermons by Muslim clerics during Friday prayers, with some fearing public protests and sit-ins.

Leaders of Christian churches in Lebanon have also repeatedly voiced their rejection of civil marriage, describing it as a "sacrilegious" procedure.

Christian and Muslim clerics fear the move would "distance the youth from religion and curtail the powers of

religious courts, the financial backbone of religious hierarchies," said the English-language Daily Star newspaper. Mr. Hariri, a Sunni Muslim, does not oppose the principle of civil marriage in Lebanon but he insists the time is not right for sensitive political changes and believes the government should refrain from tackling issues that could stir up internal dissent.

Mr. Hrawi, who has been pushing the reform since 1996, told the cabinet meeting on Wednesday that it was a "prelude towards getting rid of the confessional political system as I prepare to leave office."

Mr. Hrawi also announced Wednesday that he requested Shiite Muslim Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, whose ministerial block voted in favour of the bill, to begin setting up a national council to abolish sectarianism.

Mr. Hariri, however, retorted that the marriage bill was not the first step towards rid-

ding the country of sectarianism.

Some analysts believe that legalising civil marriage is merely an administrative issue, not directly linked to the overall confessional system in Lebanon — and that the outcry is part of ongoing tension and conflict among Lebanese leaders.

In Lebanon, government posts and civil service jobs continue to be handed out along confessional lines even though the 1989 Taef accords that ended the 1975-1990 civil war called for the end of such a system.

Only religious marriages — Christian, Muslim and Jewish — are recognised in Lebanon and registered in the religious courts representing the country's 19 different confessions.

Civil marriages cannot be performed in Lebanon, forcing many Lebanese to travel abroad for the ceremony, mostly to nearby Cyprus or Turkey.

Cabinet approves \$283,000 FAO grant

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Ministers Saturday approved a \$283,000 grant from the Rome-based U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC).

The Cabinet authorised Minister of Agriculture Mijib Khreisha to sign an agreement for the grant, which will finance the development and modernisation of the corporation's data system.

During a regular session, the Council approved draft memoranda that the Jordanian and British governments will exchange concerning a British grant totalling JD1.27 million to the Ministry of Education to be disbursed between 1998 and 2001 under a technical assistance agreement.

Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf has been authorised to sign the memoranda on behalf of Jordan.

The Cabinet also approved the participation of the national folklore troupe in celebrations to be held in Pakistan on the country's 50th anniversary of independence, due to take place from March 29-31.

Tourism industry attracting more attention — Biltaji

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji on Saturday said decision-makers have started directing special attention to the tourism industry, given its contribution to the national economy and its potential to create job opportunities.

Addressing the opening session of a two-day meeting by the Arab Federation for Hotels and Tourism, Mr. Biltaji said the role of the government is to provide an umbrella for the private sector and to enact legislation and laws needed to encourage the tourism industry, protect its gains and ensure its rights.

He called for streamlining Arab efforts to advance this sector, which has witnessed setbacks due to certain circumstances.

Referring to the different types of tourism, including religious, historical, archaeological,

cal, and cultural tourism, Mr. Biltaji said each tourist region in the Arab World complements others. He called on the federation to implement tourism training programmes in hotel service and voiced hope that the federation would support Jordan's request to host the meetings of the International Federation of Hotels and Restaurants in Amman in 1999.

The federation's president, Chihman Aydi, stressed the need, for providing the necessary facilities and incentives to encourage investment in the tourism sector and for overcoming the obstacles and difficulties impeding the growth of this important industry.

Mr. Aydi outlined the importance of inter-Arab cooperation in encouraging eco-tourism and called for targeting Arab citizens, whom he said are the main sources of tourism in the Arab World.

Suspected Russian godfather strikes deal with Israeli court

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A suspected godfather of a Russian mafia group admitted to charges of seeking to corrupt Israeli officials in a plea bargaining deal with a court here, judicial sources said Friday.

Gregory Lerner, 47, who has been in custody for ten months, admitted the corruption charge in exchange for the dropping of other charges against him.

He admitted to offering large sums of money to leaders of the opposition Labour Party, including former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, prior to general elections in May 1996, the sources said.

He also admitted to acts of fraud involving several tens of million of dollars against Russian banks.

According to the charges against him, Lerner sought to

win highly placed politicians as patrons to protect him from the law and to obtain authorisation to open a bank in Israel to launder money.

In exchange for his admissions, the prosecutor agreed not to indict Lerner with the murder of a Russian banker who, according to police charges, was killed in connection with Lerner's activities.

Opposition expresses concern over public freedom situation, foreign presence

AMMAN (J.T.) — Representatives of Jordan's 13 opposition parties have issued a lengthy statement expressing their deep concern over what they termed a deterioration of the general condition of the country and urging the government to take specific measures to address the situation.

The statement gave the details of a meeting, held last week by the parties at the Islamic Action Front headquarters, which focused on two issues: public freedoms, which they said have seriously deteriorated, and the presence of foreign forces on Arab land, which they said constitute flagrant aggression

against the nation's sovereignty.

The statement noted that representatives of various opposition groups expressed concern over the deterioration of public freedoms under quasi-martial law rule, noting in this regard that the executive authority has stepped up its measures against political groups by preventing marches, sit-ins and seminars, storming mosques, beating up citizens, arresting heads of political groups and leaders of civic institutions, and dealing irresponsibly with the rioters in Ma'an.

The statement pointed out that the government was rapidly normalising ties with the "Zionist enemy," despite the hostile Israeli stance toward the Arab Nation. The statement added that the government hosted Ariel Sharon, who threatened to assassinate Khaled Misha'al, while a parliamentary delegation paid a visit to the Jewish state, during which Israeli killed three Palestinian workers.

According to the statement, the speakers demanded that:

1. The government stop its present measures against the people's basic rights.
2. The government release all detainees held in conjunction with the Ma'an affair, including Leith Shheilat, and hold those responsible for the death of Ma'an citizen Mohammad Khatib accountable for their actions.
3. The government put an end to the normalisation process with Israel and recall Jordan's ambassador from Tel Aviv.

The speakers, according to the statement, expressed their condemnation of continued occupation by foreign forces of Arab waters and lands and voiced approval of a call by the head of the Iraqi National Progressive Front to observe March 16 as a day of solidarity with the Iraqi people in the face of sanctions and injustice.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

- 16:10 Cartoon — The Pink Panther
- 16:15 Cartoon — Pumpkin Patch
- 16:30 French Programmes
- 18:00 — Skippy
- 18:30 Drama — The Border Town
- 19:00 — Le Journal
- 19:15 Documentary Magazine — Le Tour De France
- 19:30 — News Headlines
- 19:35 America's Funniest People
- 20:00 Documentary — The People and Places of Africa
- 20:30 The Ultimate Guide to Motherhood (Pt. 1)
- 21:10 — Renegade
- 22:00 — News in English
- 22:30 Drama — North and South
- 23:59 Comedy — The Upper Hand
- 00:30 — End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

- 04:16 — Fajr
- 05:34 — (Sunrise) Duha
- 11:43 — Dhuhur
- 15:10 — 'Asr
- 17:51 — Maghreb
- 19:09 — 'Isha

CHURCHES

- St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifheh, Tel. 5920740
- Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
- St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590

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JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4623266
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweifheh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church 771331

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Wisam Hanyin 748563
Dr. Mubles Mazharab 820425
Dr. Hatim Hamoun 5674984
Dr. Munther Al Qraini 779959
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 4637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 4623572
Al Salam pharmacy 4636730
Yacoub pharmacy 4641945

TEMPERATURES are expected to rise becoming sunny and cloudy. Skies will be sunny to partly cloudy and winds southwesterly moderate. In Amman, it will be sunny and warm. Winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min/Max temp.
Amman 02/18
Aqaba 09/27
Deserts 1/21
Jordan Valley 09/25

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 14, Aqaba 25 Humidity readings: Amman 39 per cent. Aqaba 25 per cent.

Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660
Najih pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Fawzi Abdul Rajza 252970
Dr. Quds pharmacy 4637777
ZARQA:
Dr. Walid Nabhan 3851743
Khalaf pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

- Food Control Centre 4637111
- Civil Defence Department 5661111
- Civil Defence Emergency 4630341
- Rescue Police 192 4621111, 4637777
- Fire Brigade 4617101
- Blood Bank 775121
- Highway Police 843402
- Traffic Police 896390
- Public Security Dept. 4630321
- Hot: Complaints 5605800
- Price Complaints 5661176
- Water & Sewerage Complaints 857467
- Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
- Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
- Overseas Calls 010230
- Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
- Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
- Jordan Television 773111
- Radio Jordan 774111
- Water Authority 5680100
- J. Electricity Authority 813615

Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-55200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-55200

HOSPITALS

- AMMAN:**
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdi 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 826813, 856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Akileh Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 8469131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5692240/50
Amal Hospital 5674155
- ZARQA:**
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)247100
Jeddah (add) (RJ)

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44) 55200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone (44) (52700)

ARRIVALS

- Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights**
08:05 — Lamaca (RJ)
08:25 — Bombay (RJ)
08:35 — Jeddah (RJ)
09:10 — Beirut (RJ)
09:15 — Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:50 — Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

17:00 — Jeddah (add) (RJ)
17:00 — Brussels, Geneva (RJ)
17:05 — Paris (RJ)
17:45 — London (RJ)
18:05 — Athens (RJ)
19:00 — Madrid, Vienna (RJ)
19:40 — Rome (RJ)
20:55 Frankfurt, Amsterdam (RJ)
22:50 — Vienna, Aqaba (RJ)
00:05 — Cairo (RJ)
01:00 — Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

- 03:25 — Rome (AZ)
- 10:00 — Sanaa (Y)
- 12:25 — Bahrain (GF)
- 13:00 — Moscow (SU)
- 15:00 — Doha (QR)
- 17:45 — Jeddah (SV)
- 20:00 — Tel Aviv (LY)
- 20:40 — Cairo (MS)
- 23:10 — Istanbul (TK)
- Royal Wings (RW)**
07:45 — Aqaba (RW)
09:05 — Amman (QAIA) (RW)
09:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:20 — Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30 — Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:20 — Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

- Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights**
06:00 — Beirut (RJ)
08:40 — Frankfurt (RJ)

10:50 — Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)
11:00 — Aqaba, London (RJ)
11:15 — Rome (RJ)
11:30 — Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:00 — Jeddah (add) (RJ)
12:20 — Athens (RJ)
20:00 — Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:10 — Cairo (RJ)
20:15 — New Delhi (RJ)
21:25 — Bangkok (RJ)
21:30 — Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:30 — Damascus (RJ)
22:30 — Bangkok (RJ)
22:45 — Sanaa (RJ)
23:00 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights

- 03:00 — Athens (OA)
- 04:20 — Rome (AZ)
- 06:40 — Beirut, London (BA)
- 07:50 — London (BA)
- 11:00 — Sanaa (Y)
- 13:15 — Doha (GF)
- 14:50 — Moscow (SU)
- 16:00 — Doha (QR)
- 19:15 — Jeddah (SV)
- 21:20 — Tel Aviv (LY)
- 21:40 — Cairo (MS)

Royal Wings (RW)

- 06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
- 08:15 — Aqaba (RW)
- 09:30 — Amman (QAIA) (RW)
- 16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
- 17:55 — Tel Aviv (RW)
- 20:30 — Amman (QAIA) (RW)
- 21:50 — Aqaba (RW)

Queen, international policy centre make preparations for water symposium

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor met with the director of American University's Centre for the Global South, Clovis Maksoud, to discuss preparations for the symposium on "Water and Dispute Prevention," which will be held next October at American University's Washington College of Law, according to a press release Saturday.

Queen Noor, who is chair of the centre's advisory board, emphasised the importance of such a conference, since water shortage is an issue of primary concern in the developing world and the Middle East in particular.

According to scientific estimates, developing countries

will need investment of up to \$1 billion to irrigate land and grow food to meet rising demands. Over the next 30 years, more than 60 per cent of the world's population will face water- and food-related problems. The Queen noted that per capita water supply in Jordan is among the lowest in the world, and is falling rapidly as population rises; by 2025, it will be only 17 per cent of its level in 1960, the statement said.

The symposium, which will bring together researchers, government officials and private sector representatives, will cover issues ranging from "Water Security: Challenges for the 21st Century" and "The Role of the Private Sector

in Managing Water Resources," to "Researching Freshwater Disputes," and "Recommendations for Preventing Freshwater Conflicts."

In preparation for the symposium, American University graduate students have been compiling case studies on water issues and conflict resolution, with the Middle East featuring a core part of their research. The students found an "obvious link to environmental issues and the geopolitical conflicts" in the region that can be traced back to the scarcity of water and the struggle to control freshwater resources, according to the announcement.

The Centre for the Global

South, which was founded in 1992 at American University, examines critical issues affecting the poorer developing countries of the world, increasingly characterised collectively as the South. The global South includes nearly 157 of a total of 184 recognised states in the world, and many have less developed or severely limited resources. The centre seeks to examine issues related to global inequality, development, environment, human rights, women, population, the changing international legal order and regional cooperation, as well as new roles for the United Nations and other international organisations, the statement said.

New contractors' association chairman urges government to pay outstanding debts

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The newly-elected chairman of Jordan Construction Contractors Association (JCCA) urged the government Saturday to repay millions of dinars in debts owed to JCCA members.

Wa'el Touqan, who was re-elected for a second four-year term on Friday, said debts were harming the development of most of the agency's 843 members.

Mr. Touqan won 414 votes, while his rival, Mohammad Murad, clinched 340 out of the 755 votes cast.

The Ministry of Public

Works owes contractors JD3 million while the Ministry of Water and Irrigation owes them between JD10 million and JD15 million, according to Mr. Touqan.

Eight others were elected as members of the association's council. They are: Mohy El Eddine Halbouni, Mohammad Boustani, Sayid Kouz, Abdullah Khalifah, Mohamad Tarawneh, Atif Daghmi, Mohammad Moubil and Mohammad Qasbi.

Mr. Touqan said several ministries have failed to repay millions of dinars in debts owed to Jordanian contractors for work they carried out in the past.

He said several ministries have been contacted to speed up the debt repayments but to no avail.

Mr. Touqan said the contractors owe commercial banks around JD790 million in debts, mostly to finance projects.

In addition, most government agencies prefer to hire foreign contractors to carry out their projects, further hurting local contractors.

"Most of the foreign loans extended to the Kingdom are given on the condition that projects be implemented by non-Jordanian firms," Mr. Touqan told the Jordan Times. "Unfortunately, the government has always accepted

these conditions to guarantee these loans," Mr. Touqan said. "Therefore, Jordanian contractors are excluded from big projects that are implemented by foreign firms."

Mr. Touqan said that although the JCCA's internal charter stipulates that projects in Jordan should not be awarded to contractors who are not members of the JCCA, the government has not been abiding by that.

He said the Audit Bureau's "interference" in the work of contractors was another major problem facing them, in addition to tight spending by the government on new projects.

Armed forces commemorate 30th anniversary of Karameh Battle

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Armed Forces Saturday held a ceremony under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan at Karameh in the Jordan Valley in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of Karameh Battle.

The Crown Prince laid a wreath near the Karameh Battle Martyrs Monument, located at the site of the battle between Jordanian and invading Israeli forces in 1968, and

recited verses of the Holy Koran.

Accompanied by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marshal Abdul Hafez Kaabneh, Prince Hassan reviewed the commemorative plaques at the monument and the standards of the army units that took part in the battle.

He later met with delegations from the armed forces schools and military cultural centres visiting the monument.

The monument was also visited Saturday by delegations from Jordanian state and private universities, Ministry of Education schools, youth centres, municipalities, and others.

They laid wreaths at the monument and recited verses from the Holy Koran at the ceremony.

Meanwhile, Minister of Education and Higher Education Mohammad Hamdan attended a ministry ceremony

held at the monument in which boy and girl scouts from public schools took part.

The scouts marched from South Shuneh town toward the monument site carrying banners and portraits of His Majesty King Hussein. Upon gathering at the site, speeches were made honouring the Armed Forces for their defence of the homeland.

Senior local government officials were among the audience attending the ceremony.

House expected to reject press law amendments

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament appears set to reject government amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law, criticised by local and foreign human rights activists as muzzling public freedoms.

The House's National Guidance Committee is expected to vote on the amended press law during its meeting on Monday.

"It seems that most committee members will vote for the law's rejection," said one deputy who preferred anonymity.

The High Court of Justice revoked tough government amendments to the 1993 press law introduced in May while Parliament was in recess, saying that the introduction of the temporary law was unconstitutional since there was no state of emergency or necessitating circumstances for the government to change the previous law.

The unexpected decision by the country's highest administrative court, annulled the decree, which forced 13 of Jordan's 20 weeklies to close down by tightening curbs on reporting, imposing stiffer fines on offenders and introducing prohibitive capital requirements.

Deputy Raji Haddad, head of the nine-member committee, said the committee was contemplating two main options.

"The first is to revoke the law and then send it to the Senate," Dr. Haddad told the Jordan Times.

The second option, he said, was to accept the law, discuss its articles and then amend them, after extensive discussions with journalists and government officials.



Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khreisha and Omani Ambassador Sheikh Hamad Ben Hilal Al Mimari on Saturday review agricultural issues of concern (Photo by Youssef Allan)

Oman taking steps to facilitate import of Jordanian produce — ambassador

AMMAN (Petra) — Omani Ambassador to Jordan Sheikh Hamad Ben Hilal Al Mimari on Saturday said his country has taken a series of measures designed to facilitate the entry of Jordanian agricultural products to its markets.

Mr. Mimari said these agricultural products will arrive at the central border market in Oman, where the shipments will be exempted from customs duty and the truck drivers issued visas to transport the products to their destinations.

The ambassador, who was speaking at a meeting here with Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khreisha, said Jordanian trucks will not be restricted in their operations nor will the shipments be required to pay municipal-

ity fees. Oman is looking forward to importing larger volumes of agricultural products, provided they are competitive in quality and price, said Mr. Mimari, adding that Oman will be ready to provide Jordanian markets with their needs of fish.

Welcoming the Omani facilities for the Jordanian products, Mr. Khreisha said Jordan can fill most of Oman's needs of high quality agricultural products around the year.

Jordan is ready to fill Oman's needs of fertilisers, veterinary medicines and agricultural equipment and would be willing to provide qualified and skilled agricultural personnel to help develop farming in Oman, the minister said.

Mr. Khreisha and the

Omani ambassador reviewed Jordan's use of modern technology in agriculture and the numerous plans under way to increase fruits and vegetable output horizontally and vertically.

He noted that both Jordan's agricultural products and veterinary medicines are high quality and are exported to many countries.

The two sides exchanged views on cooperation in agricultural fields and exchanging expertise and information.

Mr. Khreisha and the ambassador also discussed means by which Jordan could benefit from Oman's experiments in growing palm trees, which the minister said is one of the ministry's priority schemes.

Conference on Jordan's modern history opens Tuesday

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The development of Jordan's social institutions, including the family, labour and women's movements, as well as political parties and ethnic minorities, will be the focus of a conference set to open on Tuesday.

Some of the most renowned authorities on the Kingdom's modern history will gather at the University of Jordan (UJ) between March 24 and 26 for the meeting on "The Social History of Jordan," which will cover six main themes on social changes over the last 100 years.

The panels will focus on: family and society in the late 19th century; the establishment of the state; the arts and social history; changes and challenges in the 20th century; the regional and international con-

text; and identity and public space and democratisation.

"The conference will provide the public with a different point of view in reading the history of Jordan," said Hani Hattari, head of Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Centre. "The centre, together with UJ's faculty of humanities and social sciences, are organising the event."

"The history of a country is not only its political history," Mr. Hattari told the Jordan Times. "It also is the history of its people and social groups which shaped today's Jordan."

Al Urdun Al Jadid, which has monitored and analysed Jordan's political liberalisation for the past five years, has made plans to publish new books and booklets on social classes, movements and institutions every year.

"The first of our publications on the history of educational institutions will be released

before the end of the year and will be on Al Kulliah Al Islamiyyah [The Islamic College]," Mr. Hattari said. The school, between the First and Second circles, is one of the country's oldest.

He added that the centre was about to publish a booklet on social life in Amman in the 1940s and 1950s.

During the first session, to be chaired by prominent Jordanian historian Sulaiman Mousa, Mustafa Hamaneh, director of the Centre for Strategic Studies at UJ, will present cases of the settlement of nomadic families in the Balqa, Karak and Ajloun regions.

Eugene Rogan, from St. Antony's College, Oxford, will review the rapid social changes that took place in Ottoman Transjordan.

At the last session of the conference, Laurie Brand, from the University of Southern Cal-

ifornia, will analyse the interplay of domestic and external factors in the evolution of the women's movement.

The third panel, on March 25, will be chaired by Al-Mabarra, from UJ, will include lectures by leading architects Jafar Touqan and Ammar Khammash on architecture and society as well as architecture as a record of the social history of Jordan, respectively.

HRH Princess Wijdan Ali, vice president of the Institute of Diplomacy, will chair the sixth panel, which will deal with the development of Jordanian identity and Jordanian-Palestinian relations.

Other Jordanian researchers to take part in the conference include historian Ra'uf Abu Jaber, sociologist Mousa Shiebi, and former Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber, director of the Institute of Diplomacy.

what's going on

FILM

* "La passage" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabel Weibdeh on Monday, March 23, at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Arab calligraphy by Iranian calligrapher 'Ain Al Din Sadeq Zadeh at the University of Jordan, until March 23.

* "Colours of Life" at Books@Cafe (Tel. 837931/2), until April 30.

* "Modern Jordanian Ceramics" by Raed Al Dabbeh at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Arman, until April 30.

* Works by late Iraqi artist Seddiq Ahmad at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5695027), until March 29.

* Works by Sana Kayyali at Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 5681303/4), until March 26. (Proceeds will go to Al Quds Al Sharif Defending Association).

* Works by Jordanian artist Youssef Baddawi at Darat Al Funun, Jabel Weibdeh, until April 9 (Tel. 4643251/2). Also displaying a private collection of Mardoub Bishara entitled "A Vision, An Identity" and works by contemporary Arab artists — "The New Collection."

Fulbright employee threatens legal action over dismissal for political activities

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An employee of the Binational Fulbright Commission has threatened to take the Commission to court for "arbitrary dismissal" if it does not rescind her dismissal before March 31.

Aide Dabbas, a programme officer at the Commission, told the Jordan Times that the Commission's executive director has fired her effective as of March 31 for publicly opposing U.S. and British policy in Iraq and for criticising the U.N. economic sanctions on Iraq. She also claimed that the members of the Fulbright Commission board — composed of five Jordanians and five Americans — have denied her "due process" by terminating her employment before giving her an opportunity to address the board.

In a March 1 memorandum to Ms. Dabbas, the executive director of the Commission, Alain McNamara, wrote that "...the welfare of the Commission and what you deem is the sanctity of your own determined beliefs [as an activist] are incompatible."

In the three-page memorandum addressed to Ms. Dabbas, Mr. McNamara wrote that her public actions before, during and after the Feb. 13 pro-Iraq demonstration in downtown Amman and an ensuing debate on NETS on-line local conference sites between Ms. Dabbas and Jordan Television Director General Nasser Judeh, "who also happens to be the son-in-law of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, our Royal patron," led Mr. McNamara to conclude that Ms. Dabbas "lacked both

judgement and consideration."

He also quoted several "inflammatory" excerpts from messages transmitted on NETS by Ms. Dabbas before Feb. 13: "...the U.S. message is that they really don't give a damn about our lives..."; "...we must voice our anger and disgust with the U.S. genocidal policies against Arab people..."; and "...this aggression is also directed towards Jordan and the people of Jordan."

The messages were transmitted to the "Ask the Government," "Her Majesty's," and "GID" conference sites.

The memorandum said Ms. Dabbas was "an implicit organiser" in mobilising participants to the "illegal demonstration on (Feb. 13)" and quoted her as encouraging people on-line to participate in the downtown march. Additionally, Mr. McNamara wrote that she encouraged people to call her to acquire protest signs made for car windows denouncing "American and British aggression against... Iraq."

The signs, posted in her car parked every day in front of the Commission, caused "concern, if not nervous confusion" among some of the American grantees, he said.

He also said that the debate with Mr. Judeh — which covered, among other things, the legality of imposing a ban on demonstrations and applying the 1956 martial law on public meetings — was "disrespectful in tone and language," and that he had to learn from other sources that Ms. Dabbas was "arrested and detained" in conjunction with the Feb. 13 incident.

"As you know, this caused me some concern, first of all for your

well-being, let alone for the effect of your actions on this Commission," he wrote.

Ms. Dabbas, who holds both Jordanian and U.S. citizenship, said the points raised in the letter are slanderous and libellous and a breach of constitutional rights under both the Jordanian and American Constitutions.

"Article 15 of the Jordanian constitution and the first amendment to the U.S. constitution give me the right to speak freely," she said. "I have not said anything that everyone else in Jordan, including high-ranking officials, hasn't said. I spoke in my own personal capacity, not as an employee of Fulbright. Should I be summarily executed just because I spoke out against U.S. foreign policy?"

Ms. Dabbas also contended she was never arrested or taken to court as a consequence of the Feb. 13 incident.

"I was taken to the police station, but I wasn't fingerprinted, nor was I arrested or charged with anything," she said. "I was asked for identification and released. No one has the right to say that I participated in an illegal act except for the courts."

She contended that she did encourage people to participate in the march, but after hearing that the government had issued the protest ban, she sent another message out on NETS pointing this out to subscribers.

"I didn't want to get anyone into trouble or encourage them to do anything illegal," she said. "I encouraged it only when I thought it was legal."

She contended Mr. McNamara's assertions that her actions had upset Fulbright students in Jordan, saying that many of them expressed to her their own disgust with American pol-

icy. Additionally, she said, the debate with Mr. Judeh was carried out "in a public forum designed for such debate."

Ms. Dabbas also claimed that the board has denied her due process. No mention was made of her activities until Feb. 26, nearly two weeks after the Feb. 13 demonstration, when Mr. McNamara personally addressed the issue with her, she said. Two days later, she was served the memorandum.

"This in itself is a violation of the bylaws, since they require that he get the approval of the board to terminate my employment," she said.

Since then, she said, she has attempted to petition the ten-member board, which she stated is also her right according to Fulbright bylaws. Until now, she said she has not received a response.

Board member David Bosworth, also chief executive officer of Motorola/FastLink-Jordan, said his understanding of the bylaws is that if an employee seeks legal counsel prior to requesting an audience with the board, the employee advocates the right to petition the board.

"Had Ms. Dabbas petitioned the board before contacting a lawyer, we would have been happy to hear her issues," he said.

He also said Mr. McNamara acted within the parameters of the bylaws and informed the board of his decision immediately after the decision was taken.

"The board approved the decision," he said. "The board is not and does not always have to be informed of every decision of the executive director in advance. As executive director, some latitude has to be allowed in

decision-making. He was within his rights in taking this decision."

The board consists of Minister of Education and Higher Education Mohammad Hamdan, Royal Medical Services Director Major General Youssef Qsous, Jordan University of Science and Technology President Saad Hijazi, Senator Leila Sharaf, U.S. Ambassador to Jordan Wesley Egan, Country Director of AMIDEAST Janine Al Tal, Cultural Affairs Officer of the U.S. Embassy Susan Ziadah, Economic Counsellor of the U.S. Embassy Gary Grappo, and Mr. Bosworth.

"From my perspective," Mr. Bosworth added, "I would say that it is incumbent on Ms. Dabbas to act responsibly towards the governments of the U.S. and Jordan as well as to the students she is supposed to be supporting. If I were a student, I would probably be concerned to see or hear my contact at the commission behaving this way."

The Binational Fulbright Commission is part of the Fulbright Programme, the U.S. government's premier scholarship programme, which annually sends some 800 American students to more than 100 nations to pursue various studies and research activities. There are currently 11 Fulbright scholars in Jordan.

The programme was created by the U.S. Congress in 1946 following an initiative by Senator William Fulbright as a step toward global understanding and an alternative to armed conflict. It is funded by an annual Congressional appropriation.

Both sides accuse the other of contradicting the "spirit of Fulbright."

"The idea behind Fulbright is to foster communication and promote

understanding," said Mr. Bosworth.

"The contact person — Ms. Dabbas — is engaged in anti-American activities. That's the particular issue I have with this story."

Ms. Dabbas countered that Senator Fulbright was himself a self-described dissenter and probably would have been in support of her activities.

In the foreword to his book, "The Price of Empire" — in which he is highly critical of U.S. policy vis-à-vis the former Soviet Union, Vietnam and the Middle East — he wrote: "If people remember me, I suppose it will be as a dissenter."

"That was not what I had in mind, but when important issues go contrary to your highest hopes and strongest convictions, there is nothing you can do except dissent — or drop out."

"I opposed U.S. and British policy towards Iraq and I have been active against sanctions, which I think are a crime against humanity," Ms. Dabbas said during an interview with the Jordan Times. "When UNICEF says that 675,000 children have died in the last seven years due to sanctions, I think it is a crime against humanity and I don't think I should be fired for saying so."

"Was Senator Fulbright in contradiction with the spirit of international understanding?" she asked.

Mr. McNamara refused to comment on the issue, except to say that if Ms. Dabbas pursues legal action, the discussion belongs in the courts. No Jordanian board member was available for comment.

Korean peace talks end with no agreement

GENEVA (AFP) — Four-party talks on implementing a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula ended acrimoniously here Saturday, with the U.S. side blaming North Korean intransigence for the lack of progress.

Saturday morning's final session broke up without any agreements being reached and no date set for a further round of discussions.

"We proposed to negotiate steps to reduce tensions and build confidence on the Korean Peninsula," U.S. delegation chief Stanley Roth told reporters.

"Unfortunately, the North Korean delegation was not prepared to do so," Mr. Roth said.

However, Chinese delegation chief and talks Chairman Chen Jian stressed that the four-party process would continue, with all sides committed to thrashing out a lasting peace.

"We have clarified some of the important differences. We were not, however,

able to narrow the differences sufficiently to move forward in our work at this time," Mr. Chen said.

Describing the talks as an "inherently long and difficult process," Mr. Chen said it was nevertheless "important that we have begun it and intend to continue."

"The fact that we are here today demonstrates the commitment of all parties to our common search for a permanent peace," he said, adding that dates for a third round of negotiations would be discussed "through proper channels."

The five-day talks — bringing together the two Koreas, China and the United States — were the second round of discussions, following a landmark meeting last December.

The talks are aimed at drawing up a permanent peace treaty to replace the current armistice that technically ended the 1950-53 Korean war.

"We were not able to reach a major breakthrough," South Korean

delegation head Song Young-Shik said after the talks ended Saturday.

However, Mr. Song insisted that some "modest" progress had been made, if only in the sense that "talks are better than no talks."

Serious problems became evident during Friday's sessions, as North Korea pressed its demand that the issue of U.S. troop withdrawal from the Korean Peninsula be addressed before the setting up of a subcommittee to resolve other topics.

According to a South Korean delegate, Pyongyang said it would agree to the creation of a subcommittee only if the withdrawal of 37,000 troops stationed in South Korea was discussed first.

"We told them we could not accept that," the South Korean delegate said.

Saturday's brief morning session had been tagged on to the schedule after the North Korean delegation requested a delay late Friday to consult with its government in Pyongyang.



South Korean former spy chief Kwon Young-Hae is transferred to his room at a hospital in Seoul. Mr. Kwon, the former director of the Agency for National Security Planning, attempted suicide early Saturday morning while at the prosecutor's office where he was being questioned about a smear campaign against President Kim Dae-Jung (Reuters photo)

Former S. Korean intelligence head attempts suicide

SEOUL (AFP) — The former chief of South Korea's intelligence agency Saturday attempted suicide while in custody for questioning over a Machiavellian smear campaign against the president, prosecutors said.

Kwon Young-Hae, former director of the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP), the renamed Korean CIA, slashed his stomach with a blade in a toilet at the Seoul district prosecutor's office.

"At 4:40 a.m. (1940 GMT Friday), investigators heard thumping sounds in the toilet. When they opened the door, they found Mr. Kwon bleeding from wounds to his stomach," said Kim Won-Chi, head of the Southern Seoul Prosecutors Office.

"He was immediately rushed to hospital," he said, adding that Mr. Kwon had a finger-length blade hidden in a Bible which he had taken with him when he presented himself at the prosecutor's office Friday.

Mr. Kwon underwent two hours of surgery. "He bled heavily from long, narrow cuts and some stabbing wounds to his stomach but he is out of danger now," a hospital official said.

He added that barring infection, Mr. Kwon should be discharged in two weeks.

Prosecutors said the incident occurred after Mr. Kwon was taking a

short prayer break during overnight questioning on charges that he masterminded a smear campaign against then-opposition presidential hopeful Kim Dae-Jung.

Mr. Kwon had apparently despaired of escaping indictment after being informed by investigators that prosecutors would seek an arrest warrant for him Saturday, television reports said.

Prosecutors said the incident would not prevent them from pressing charges against Mr. Kwon. He could face many years in jail for violating election laws, a law barring the ANSP from intervening in politics and for libel.

A spokesman for Kim Dae-Jung's ruling National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) accused Mr. Kwon of being unrepentant, adding: "This incident shows how strong the resistance by anti-reform forces are."

The opposition Grand National Party (GNP) called the incident a "national tragedy," calling for an independent probe of the case.

Munhwa daily said in an editorial that the suicide attempt must not help cover up the smear campaign. It lamented, however, that rows over the campaign had gravely compromised South Korea's intelligence operations.

Five agency officials have already been arrested on charges of involve-

ment in the smear campaign against Kim Dae-Jung who on Dec. 18 became the first opposition candidate to win power in South Korea.

Mr. Kwon, a retired general and confidant of former President Kim Young-Sam, is accused of leading the smear campaign and tampering with ANSP documents to blackmail the current government.

Local press reports said Mr. Kwon was very close to Kim Young-Sam's controversial son, Kim Hyun-Chul, who has been convicted of influence-peddling and corruption.

Mr. Kwon allegedly told his subordinates to arrange a press conference by a U.S.-based Korean businessman, Yoon Hong-Jun in Beijing a week before the polls in a bid to portray Kim Dae-Jung as a secret supporter of Stalinist North Korea.

He allegedly paid Mr. Yoon more than \$200,000.

Mr. Kwon is also accused of ordering his subordinates to alter agency documents so that both the then ruling camp and Kim Dae-Jung's side would appear to have been in contact with North Koreans before the presidential election.

Mr. Kwon allegedly used these documents as a means to blackmail the Kim Dae-Jung government to save himself and his subordinates from being punished for staging smear campaigns against Mr. Kim.

U.S.-based Chinese dissident denied entry to Hong Kong

HONG KONG (AFP) — U.S.-based Chinese dissident Wang Bingzhang has been denied entry to Hong Kong at the request of Beijing and sent to the nearby Portuguese enclave of Macau, a human rights group said here Saturday.

Mr. Wang, 50, was detained by Hong Kong immigration authorities late Friday after arriving from Macau, the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said.

Spokesman Frank Lu said Mr. Wang's wife, who was travelling with him, was told by immigration officials that her husband had been intercepted "following a request from the central (Chinese) government."

Mr. Wang, who had arrived in Hong Kong from New York Monday, was detained for several hours before being returned to Macau about 1:00 a.m. Saturday (1700 GMT Friday), Mr. Lu told AFP.

He said Mr. Wang, a U.S. citizen, flew from Macau to Taiwan late Saturday morning intending to catch a flight back to New York.

Mr. Wang told reporters at the airport before he flew to Taiwan that he regretted the Hong Kong government's refusal to let him enter in deference to pressure from Beijing.

According to cable television News Channel Two, he told reporters he had organised more dissident activities on his trip.

"I made this trip to organise the return of dissidents abroad to China," Mr. Wang said. "I have also met with dissidents from China in Macau and Hong Kong. Training has also been conducted."

Hong Kong Security Secretary Peter Lai denied local officials had consulted the Chinese government on Mr. Wang's case.

"Wang was denied entry into Hong Kong because we suspected he was travelling on fake documents," Mr. Lai said.

"It is normal practice for immigration officials to detain non-Hong Kong residents who use fake documents," he said.

In late January, Mr. Wang slipped into China via Macau using an alias — he was on a list of activists to be refused entry into China.

His intention was to organise an internal opposition party to the ruling Communists, but after a two-week manhunt he was arrested and deported.

Mr. Wang vowed to return to China to continue his pro-democracy efforts.

"The time is good now for democracy in China and the future looks strong for us," Mr. Wang said at the time on his return to the United States, adding that after meeting dissidents in China he believed the number of small pro-democracy groups was growing.

There was increasing frustration with rampant corruption and heavy taxes, Mr. Wang alleged. "The Chinese people are tired of all this and are ready to take action. People don't want to put up with these conditions any longer."

"The Communist Party in China knows that it has to change and it is evolving. Pressure from inside China and outside China are helping force these changes."

Mr. Wang was sent by Chinese authorities to Canada to learn medicine 21 years ago and he became a doctor. He sought political asylum in the United States in the early 1980s and later founded the China Spring magazine and the dissident group Alliance for a Democratic China there.

Clinton takes four initiatives to Africa, but little cash

WASHINGTON (AFP) — President Bill Clinton will unveil four initiatives during his upcoming tour of Africa in the fields of education, justice, trade and the environment.

But the new programmes represent only a four per cent increase in U.S. assistance to Africa, a meagre amount according to some experts. The White House has refused to put a price tag on Mr. Clinton's four initiatives, and merely has said the president would develop them during his trip.

The first initiative, "Education for Democracy and Good Government," is to be announced Tuesday during a visit to a school in Uganda. Its goal is to help provide basic schooling to African children, who are among the worst educated in the world.

The White House has already asked Congress to put aside \$26 million for this education programme in its budget submitted to Congress in February.

The second initiative, on "Conflict Prevention and Human Rights," will be announced March 25 when Mr. Clinton's plane makes a brief stop at Kigali. The programme chiefly involves the financing and training of police and judges in Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo — three countries recently wracked by conflict and in which the justice system does not exist.

"There are mechanisms that can be created so the society can resolve conflicts peacefully, and there will be a good deal of emphasis, particularly when the president goes to Rwanda, on the Justice Initiative to help resolve the problems," said Brian Atwood, head of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The White House had planned to ask \$30 million for this project.

The third programme,

"Development, Trade, and Investment," to be unveiled in South Africa, focuses on trade and investment and is considered complementary to the Africa Growth and Opportunity Bill the House of Representatives passed this month.

Another \$30 million have been assigned to this initiative, according to Mr. Clinton's budget proposal in February.

The final programme, on the environment, will be presented in Botswana, and will focus on eliminating hunger.

"Food security will be very much a part of that, because Africa has one of the most fragile ecosystems in the world, because of population growth, which will double in the next 10 years," he said.

The White House requested \$21 million for this initiative.

On paper, the four programmes total approximately \$107 million. But the White House has asked Congress only for a \$30 million increase in U.S. aid to sub-Saharan African countries for fiscal 1999 which begins in October — \$730 million as opposed to 700 million this year.

The majority of the money will come from existing projects, said Cheri Waters, vice president of InterAction, which comprises 150 non-governmental organisations.

"What they've done to do this is take the money essentially from programmes that were going to individual countries," she said.

"It's not really anything new," said Mike Williams, an aide of Democratic Representative Jim McDermott, and one of the masterminds of the bill.

"It's sort of shuffling things around to say something. We have a trip, so we have to say something," Mr. Williams added.

Bosnian opposition leader wants changes to election law

SARAJEVO (AFP) — An opposition leader in Bosnia who rejects nationalist politics has linked his decision on whether to run in September's presidential elections to changes in the electoral law.

"It is below my principles to declare my candidacy without the reform of the election law," said Selim Beslagic, leader of the Union of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Social Democrats (UBSD) and mayor of Tuzla city.

In an interview with the Bosnian news agency ONASA, he said the electoral law must be changed to ensure that all three members of Bosnia's three-member joint presidency embrace the idea of a single, multi-ethnic state.

"Some members of the Bosnian presidency completely deny Bosnia's statehood," Mr. Beslagic said in the interview released overnight Friday.

The UBSD is one of two major opponents of the ruling nationalist Party of Democratic Action (SDA) led by Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic. The other is the Social Democratic Party (SDP) of Zlatko Lagumdžija.

International representatives in Bosnia are trying to help non-nationalist politicians such as Mr. Beslagic to unite for the September elections and push aside more nationalist leaders.

Under the Dayton peace accords that ended the 1992-95 war in Bosnia, each of three communities in Bosnia — Croat, Muslim and Serb — elect a representative to the joint presidency, which Mr. Izetbegovic chairs.

Malaysian navy mounts offensive against illegal immigrants

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Malaysia's marine police is to send an armada of navy ships and speed boats, backed by two helicopters, to block an influx of illegal immigrants into the country, reports said Saturday.

More than 500 personnel would be involved in the round-the-clock operation along the west coast of peninsular Malaysia, the Star newspaper reported.

"With the help of the airforce, we are now able to conduct 24-hour air surveillance."

More observation posts will also be built along the coast," said Maritime Enforcement Centre Director Hashim Mohammad.

Mr. Hashim also said a 100-million-ringgit (\$27 million) radar and marine monitoring system, to be commissioned by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad on March 27, would be tried out during the operation.

Malaysia has expressed alarm at a sudden influx of illegal aliens, mostly from crisis-hit Indonesia, with 3,063

arrested in a two-week period compared to less than 9,000 for the whole of last year.

On top of the 6,319 already sent home in March, the Malaysian government Thursday directed the immigration department to deport another 10,000 illegals this month to free up its detention camps.

Police said Saturday the influx of illegal immigrants was becoming more serious and threatening the country's security.

Police spokesman Ghazali Mohammad Amin said they had since January detained 117 people, mostly Indonesians, for smuggling in illegals. Majority of them were caught in southern Johore state bordering Singapore.

"Anyone caught smuggling in foreigners either directly or indirectly on any mode of transportation, by land, sea or air, can be detained under the 1959 Immigration Act," he was reported as saying by Bernama news agency.

"Those found guilty will be jailed up to five

years, fined a maximum 50,000 ringgit (\$13,514) and six strokes of cane," he added.

The Star also reported that the police launched a campaign to educate villagers in the south-western Malacca state not to provide food or assistance to the illegals.

Police spokesman Farid Mahmud said many villagers had sympathised with the illegal immigrants on humanitarian grounds without realising that it was against the law to shelter them.

"We have asked them to cordon off the illegal immigrants in one place and alert the enforcement authorities immediately," Mr. Farid reportedly said.

Malaysian security forces have stepped up security measures to deter would-be migrants by invoking the strict Internal Security Act, which allows for detention without trial, against identity card forgers and traffickers.

That have also proposed mandatory whippings, a proposal condemned by the country's human rights groups.

7 Greeks arrested for attacking Albanian immigrants

ATHENS (AFP) — Seven Greek men have been arrested and charged with savagely beating up three Albanian immigrants on the island of Ikaria, a police source said Saturday.

The arrests marked the first time Greek authorities have reacted to a series of racist attacks by self-styled "commando" units throughout the country.

Those arrested admitted having beaten up three Albanian immigrants Wednesday evening in a bid to force them to leave the island. They said they had also beaten up other immigrants.

Police said that a Greek

man in his 60s was also arrested Friday in a suburb of the northern town of Salonica for injuring a 15-year-old Albanian he had chased in his car. The man explained the attack by saying he was "bothered" by the presence of Albanians in the country.

Some 300,000 Albanian immigrants live in Greece, many of them illegally while awaiting to be granted residency.

According to an opinion survey published in a Greek daily Saturday, nearly two thirds of Greeks believe there are too many immigrants in the country and 34 per cent are bothered by their presence.

China to launch 7 satellites in 1998

BEIJING (AFP) — China plans to launch seven satellites this year, the People's Daily reported Saturday.

Three U.S. satellites will be put into orbit by Long March-2 rockets and four other Chinese or foreign satellites will be launched by Long March-3 and Long March-4B rockets, the Communist Party mouthpiece said.

At the end of February, China said it would launch 10 satellites between now and the end of the century and mentioned launching a Sino-Brazilian observation satellite (ZY-1) in 1998, Chinese television

announced the signing at the beginning of the week of a contract for China to fire five satellites from U.S. group Space Systems/Loral into orbit before 2002.

Washington said it would authorise further launches in exchange for an agreement by China not to sell missiles to Iran.

Over the last 30 years, China has put around 40 satellites into orbit. But the failed launch of communications satellite Dongfanghong-3 in 1994, following a series of other failures, cast doubt on the reliability of Chinese-built launchers.

Jordan Times

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Past guide to future

THE CASE for direct U.S. intervention to save the peace process from collapse especially on the Palestinian front is indeed strong. To begin with, Washington has been part of the process all along, not as a spectator but rather as an active mediator, or a facilitator, between the Palestinian and Israeli sides. The U.S. has a long record of submitting one proposal after the other on the Middle East and any new initiative by President Bill Clinton would not constitute a dramatic departure from this record. Right from the start, the U.S. sought to intervene directly in the affairs of the Middle East and the Gulf region and did not hesitate to use its clout whether military or otherwise to influence events. The U.S., for example, was behind the partition plan that created Israel and was in the forefront of the countries which extended immediate recognition to the state of Israel. The late U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower did not hesitate to issue a direct threat to Israel to withdraw from Egypt in the wake of the tripartite invasion of that country in 1956. Former Secretaries of State William Rogers and Henry Kissinger are still remembered for plans and disengagement agreements they pushed forward. One can go on citing examples of immediate U.S. involvement in the quest for finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, many facets of which won Israeli endorsement and encouragement.

Moreover, President Clinton has affixed his signature and seal of approval on past accords between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), something which made him a party in the "deal," which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is busy trying to rewrite. The credibility of the U.S. is therefore at stake and Israel should not forget this.

After decades of trying to solve the Palestinian problem it has become obvious that if left alone the parties can never reach a consensus on how to settle their old and intractable conflict. Being the weaker party, the PNA can never on its own extricate enough concessions from the Israelis to reach a just and durable settlement. The PNA is no match to Israel on the negotiating table for obvious reasons. The reverse is also true. Israel is clearly a regional power and unless checked and controlled it will try to dictate its own terms as long as possible. Under these circumstances, there could be no solution in sight without outside help. That is why there is no escape from the conclusion that outside intervention, with the U.S. at the core of it, is indispensable for the attainment of peace in the Middle East.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneek slammed the world community for having raised an outcry when Iran declared it supports the assassination of British author Salman Rushdie for allegedly desecrating Islam and then not condemning Israel for openly declaring its intention to assassinate a Hamas member whose group struggles to end Israel's occupation of Palestine. The world community's silence this time means that Israel is above international law and no one has the right to question its behaviour and its inhuman and criminal policies, Dr. Faneek said. He said the world at large and the Europeans in particular remember the terrorist attacks which Israel has committed against the Arabs but no open condemnation is made against such actions. Khaled Misha'al, a Jordanian citizen, was openly threatened by an Israeli minister and its outrageous offence against Jordanian sovereignty, concluded the writer.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Taher Adwan said the Middle East question is not in need of fresh Western mediation efforts but meaningful pressure and practical steps to secure Israel's compliance with the requirements of peace and the implementation of U.N. resolutions. The U.S. secretary of state visited the region a month ago, the British foreign secretary has just visited the region and the U.N. secretary general is currently on a tour here — all discussing the possibility of reviving the peace process, noted the writer. But Israel has repeated to all these people that it does not accept any pressure and does not respect U.N. resolutions, Adwan said. He said the Arabs should not attach hopes on visits to the region by Western government officials or be satisfied with soothing statements and lip service to their national issue. The writer said the situation requires that the Arab leaders, especially those of Jordan, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, backed by the rest of the Arab Nation, take the initiative themselves and come to an agreement to put an end to Israel's arrogance and disregard of international legitimacy.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Export or perish — the end of food security

TO CALL for economic policies that may lead a country, such as Jordan, to achieve food security, proved to be a hollow call, based on no foundations. No country in the present day world, not even a superpower like the United States of America, is self-sufficient in the narrow sense of this slogan which has circulated for some time. Today, all peoples are interdependent, hence the phenomenal growth of trade among nations.

Dr. Sami Sunnaa, a prominent Jordanian agricultural specialist, has said that in order for Jordan to achieve self-sufficiency in wheat, it should devote almost all its cultivable land for wheat alone in order to produce what is needed for consumption of this vital item. Sufficient wheat can be produced in Jordan if we sacrifice all other agricultural products, something no responsible government can allow, and no economic planner can contemplate.

On the other hand, it would not be enough to produce that much wheat in order to reach a state of self-sufficiency or food security. True, bread is basic, but what about rice, sugar, cooking oil, cotton, and tens of other basic commodities which Jordan cannot produce locally. If food security means doing away with importing food

items, the aim is impossible to achieve, not now nor at any time in the future.

We now live in the age of globalisation and partnership with Europe. Under the circumstances the Jordanian market is no longer small and limited or closed. It is no longer acceptable not to eat except from our own farm produce, and not to dress except in our domestically made textiles. This is a suicidal prescription that may suit backward tribes living in a jungle. What is required in an integrated world is to produce goods and services in which the country enjoys some comparative/competitive advantage, so as to export the surplus and use the proceeds to pay for the importation of the country's needs.

Real and meaningful self-sufficiency does not mean producing all that we consume. What counts is that the value of goods we produce should not be less than the value of goods we consume. International trade would allow us to specialise in the production of goods which we have an advantage in producing, and to match our production with our consumption through trade with other countries. The world market is wide open to us for exchange of goods and services. Self-sufficiency means

the absence of deficit in our trade balance and in the current account of our balance of payments.

The policy of import substitution was attempted and, if at all possible proved to be a complete failure. The proper policy is to produce for exports, which was exercised by many emerging economies and proved to be a guaranteed engine for unlimited and sustainable growth.

The economy of a nation that plans to produce all its needs is condemned to failure and stagnation. Japan for instance lacks oil, foods, and raw materials. All countries of the world compete to provide Japan with its needs of oil, food and raw materials simply because Japan has money to pay for these items — it accumulated the money by exporting the surplus of its excellent industrial production. Would anyone in his/her right mind advise Japan not to produce cars and electronics in excess of its own market needs to direct resources to produce materials that its neighbours can furnish at better quality and lower cost?

Self-sufficiency in the narrow sense and the old food security slogans must be discarded once and for all. Our future and prosperity depend on our ability to export. The current slogan is export or perish.

Advocates of human rights could get better results

By Roger P. Winter

WASHINGTON — Those of us who work as human rights advocates tend to regard ourselves and our institutions as humanity's conscience and as vigilant protectors of the world's humanitarian ideals. We are fearless in judging others. We should be equally fearless in judging ourselves.

Nowhere are human rights more at risk than in Central Africa, where the past four years have brought genocide, civil wars, assassinations, massive refugee flows and periods of bloody anarchy.

During the past 20 years I have made dozens of visits to Rwanda, Congo, Uganda and Burundi, where as many as 1.5 million people have been slaughtered during that time. It is a corner of the globe that desperately needs wise human rights advocacy.

It is, I am sorry to say, a region where human rights activists are playing a potentially damaging role. We in the human rights community are so busy issuing strongly worded reports and ostracising imperfect new governments that we risk inviting more instability and bloodshed, not less.

Take the 120,000 suspected perpetrators of genocide now in Rwanda's jails. Many have not been formally charged. Most of my colleagues view that as an egregious abuse of human rights and proof that Rwanda's leaders lack commitment to basic rules of justice. I see it differently. I regard the jailing as a human rights victory.

At times, we need to adopt a more constructive attitude and intervene directly to improve human rights conditions.

Most of the country's judges, attorneys and investigators were killed during the genocide or fled the country, leaving no means of trying these 120,000 prisoners. But they are still

alive and awaiting trial. They have not been gunned down chopped apart in a frenzy of revenge for the genocide many of them helped perpetrate.

Instead, they have remained in jail while the Rwandan government tries to rebuild its judicial system. The detention of suspects for trial indicates a willingness to abide by fundamental human rights principles in difficult circumstances.

When we issue reports recommending an end to "arbitrary arrests," we should explain why these arrests occur and suggest how local officials can correct a problem that many of them readily acknowledge.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, my own U.S. Committee for Refugees and a handful of other organisations have a distinguished history of forcing international attention to the world's injustices. Human rights workers often take great personal risk to document abuses. But condemning governments — which we do well — is not enough.

At times, we need to adopt a more constructive attitude and intervene directly to improve human rights conditions.

In Rwanda, we could offer training, documentation and other assistance that might help resurrect the country's destroyed judicial system. We should, for example, use our investigative skills to collect evidence that would lead to the prosecution or release of prisoners suspected to genocide.

We should alleviate the prison overcrowding in Rwanda by lobbying donors for money to expand jails.

When we issue reports recommending an end to "arbitrary arrests," we should explain why these arrests occur and suggest how local officials can correct a problem that many of them readily acknowledge.

Having witnessed the work of Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, Uganda's Idi Amin and Milton Obote and the oppressive regimes of Burundi and Rwanda's previous genocidal

leaders, human rights workers have come to assume that all leaders in the region act with the worst motives — a presumptuous attitude reminiscent of some missionaries from an earlier era who went forth as agents of culture and empire.

For example, many human rights advocates raced to demonise the besieged new leader of Congo, Laurent Kabila, within weeks of his coming to power. Our harsh attacks taught

him to dismiss our concerns, no matter how valid they might be.

I am not questioning the value of established human rights principles, which should remain sacrosanct. Governments all over the world should permit legitimate independent efforts to monitor how they treat their citizens, and human rights workers should continue to document abuses.

But perfect leadership and capable governing systems cannot spring forth spontaneously in troubled nations that have known only misrule. Our edicts fall on deaf ears unless we shape our message constructively.

The raison d'être of international human rights organisations formed in the past quarter-century was to prevent a recurrence of the ultimate crime, genocide. We failed. All our ink, paper, faxes, meetings and lobbying did not make a meaningful difference in Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

After the genocide, we failed to push hard enough to expel genocidal killers from refugee camps, and we shrank from the truth that it was worth risking bloodshed to force a separation between killers and legitimate refugees. As the head of a refugee policy agency, I feel this failure acutely.

In retrospect, my agency should have made clear to policymakers that military action was worthwhile to resolve the problem.

Inside Rwanda, the international human rights community failed for more than a year to mount an effective human rights monitoring programme because we never before had insisted that the U.N. Human Rights Centre have real world capabilities beyond issuing occasional reports and ritual condemnations. The human rights community mistakenly assumes that it alone has the best interests of the population at heart.

Some leaders despise their own citizens, but sometimes governments are more inexperienced than evil. Central Africa's new leaders have the enormous task of reassembling nations that are among the poorest on earth, ethnically divided, riven with corruption and saturated with arms and shadowy groups willing to use those arms to gain power.

National armies are usually untrained and unrepresentative, national treasuries are virtually bare, and the political systems have limited experience with democracy. The shooting may have stopped, but a practical state of emergency persists.

Many new Congolese government officials I have met possess a credible agenda for their vast country that goes beyond the self-interest and self-enrichment of their predecessors. They appear serious about stamping out corruption and improving the lives of their fellow citizens, if only they could actually grasp the levers of government. Rather than blast these officials for their failures, human rights advocates should use their considerable knowledge to suggest how leaders can do better despite limited resources and experience.

I have found that Congo's new officials are more willing to respond openly about their errors when the discussion is a constructive dialogue rather than a one-sided cataloguing of their faults. The military in Rwanda is more willing to listen to criticism if we acknowledge the difficulties they face in waging counterinsurgency wars. Human rights failures by governments are not always deliberate.

The writer is director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, a non-profit humanitarian organisation. This comment, adapted from a longer article in The Washington Post, is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

Personalities eclipse policies in the Philippines' great poll show

By Abby Tan

MANILA — The Philippines' election campaign promises to be a slandering, sleazy clash of personalities.

Eighty-one presidential runners and more than 200,000 other candidates are vying for 117,000 elected positions in this scattered archipelago that prides itself on being the most open democratic society in the region.

Some people see it as democracy run amok.

President Fidel Ramos is barred constitutionally from standing for a second term in this, the second national election since the "People Power" revolution of 1986 removed dictator Ferdinand Marcos from power.

The next president will have the difficult task of trying to steer the country out of an economic crisis linked to the east Asian currency chaos. Yet the candidates are an odd bunch.

Most have no party machinery and no vice-presidential running mate. They know they cannot win on May 11. Their candidates are a statement of their egos. Some of the better-known ones are:

— Imelda Marcos, 68-year-old widow of the former dictator, who opened her campaign by walking on her knees to a church altar for media effect. As corruption charges against her pile up, she is seeking a political triumph that could be seen as a popular vindication. A toothless comedian signed up to be her running mate, without her permission.

— Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago, who narrowly lost to Ramos in 1992, and who appears on posters carrying a laser sword from the Hollywood film Star Wars. The film's theme song is played when she walks onto a platform: smoke and strobe lights



Candidates (left to right) Imelda Marcos, Juan Ponce Enrile and José de Venecia

flash as she speaks. She wants another candidate struck off for having the same surname, Santiago.

— Irene Santiago counters: "I had heard that the senator was paranoid, but this takes the cake. I did not know she had a franchise on this family name." Her statement was a dig based on allegations in the 1992 campaign that Senator Santiago had a record of marital infidelity.

— Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, 74, who is the oldest of the hopefuls taking a shot at the top post. He does not want to go down in history as the only key player in the revolt that overthrew the Marcos dictatorship who failed to become president. (The others were Ramos and Corason Aquino). But he is not bothering to campaign, reckoning that, with so many candidates, he can win with only 20 per cent of the vote. In 1992, Ramos won with only 23 per cent of the vote in a seven-cornered fight.

— Manoling Morato, a charity



sweepstakes chief, who urges people not to vote for Joseph Estrada, the current vice-president and favourite in the opinion polls. Morato makes no bones about being a spoiler. He accuses Estrada of being "an alcoholic, a womaniser and an inveterate gambler, apart from being incompetent." Morato gleefully sent to local newspapers pictures from a videotape showing Estrada gambling in a casino in the company of a suspected drug runner.

— Alfredo Lim, the tough-talking 68-year-old mayor of Manila, who campaigns on a single issue: Law and order. The ex-policeman's Dirty Harry image — like the Hollywood film character, he used to shoot first and ask questions later — has appeal among urban voters wanting an end to a spate of kidnappings. His human rights record is questioned by those who object to his dabbling with suspected drug pushers' limo doors with red paint. A widower, Lim says he is looking for a first lady. His



handlers sent out the requirements: "Only women between 18 and 70 years of age need apply."

— Another character is the petite (less than five feet tall) Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, daughter of a former president, who is running for the vice-presidency. She quickly let it be known to interviewers that her former university classmate, President Bill Clinton, once walked her home. She often dances the boogie to delight the crowd.

Dancing in public is part of the ritual among election candidates. There is little Filipino politicians will not do for photographers. Estrada posed for the cover of Asiaweek magazine holding a gun.

But the prize for shameless promotion goes to senatorial candidate Loren Legarda, a former television newsreader. Her press releases, bestowed on her the title, "Princess Diana Incarnate."

Hoopa aside, the real fight is between Estrada, a self-confessed serial philan-

der, who is the candidate of the biggest opposition group, and Jose de Venecia, the candidate of the governing Lakas (Fight) party, whose track record as a wheeler-dealer in politics and business is as long as the Pasig River that runs through the capital.

The upshot of the multiplicity of candidates is the death of the party system, accompanied by a paucity of intelligent debate.

"Never has there been an election so bankrupt of political ideas and so dominated by personalities, causing concerns about the stability of Philippine democracy, facing the prospects of yet another minority presidency," laments Amanda Doronila, a widely-read commentator.

Sociologist Randolph David says elections tend to be wacky and wild, "because Filipinos cannot imagine it to be any other way. This is not an entirely wrong notion," he adds. "You demand that voters be intelligent and vote on issues. But before and after the election, the mass media feed the population with superstition and pulp. Why do you expect voters to be intelligent at election time? There is no debate because the candidates agree with one another there is no other way to run Philippine politics."

Filipinos take it all in their stride. A popular joke asks: "When a ship carrying all the presidential candidates is sunk by a big wave, who will be the lucky survivor?" Answer: "The Philippines."

It is all entertainment.

The writer is a Singaporean journalist specialising in economic and political affairs. She has been based in Manila since 1977.

— Gemini News

Arabic on the Web hampered by slow download speeds

By Ahmed Naser
Special to the Jordan Times

take an average of 45 seconds to download, whereas an article in English takes barely five.

In the case of both Al Quds Al Arabi and Al Hayat, readers of the Internet edition are not in for a surprise, since both display their content in the form of full-size images of the print editions' pages.

Users can choose which pages to view according to either page classification or page number. In the case of Al Hayat, pages can be downloaded singularly or in groups, both in the form of images.

In addition, viewing these images requires that surfers download a small assisting programme known as a plugin, which is available for download on the Internet or free-of-charge with most leading computer magazines.

As for the popularity of the two on-line editions, Al Quds has been visited by 1,784 times since it was launched on Feb. 22, whereas Al Hayat, which has been on-line since June 1, 1996, has had 610,301 surfers at its site.

Both dailies feature on-line archives of previous issues dating back to the establishment of their Web sites. Al Quds and Al Hayat are available for viewing free of charge at www.alquds.co.uk and www.alhayat.com, respectively.

Al Sharq Al Awsat, at www.arab.net/asharqal-awsat, on the other hand, has adopted a simpler yet more exclusive method of display.

Anyone with a Latin-based browser paying a monthly subscription charge can surf their site because Al Sharq presents its content in the form of simple fast-loading images that need no plugins.

Unlike Al Quds or Al Hayat, Al Sharq presents its content in separate images of each article instead of the entire page. A result of this pay-per-view policy is a download speed averaging 10 seconds.

As to whether reading papers "from a screen" will catch on in the Arab World, it all depends on computer literacy, the ability to purchase an Internet ready computer and access to the Internet.

استئناف لتتطور التماثيل...
الأمم المتحدة...
تفاوض حذر بعد محادثات صدام
وأنا في انتظار حل عقبة وحيدة

تفاوض حذر بعد محادثات صدام وأنا في انتظار حل عقبة وحيدة

بشهادة من غدا هجري...
الأمم المتحدة...
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The Arabic daily Al Sharq Al Awsat on the World Wide Web

Shocked by juvenile violence, Czechs ponder the causes

By Wolfgang Jung

PRAGUE — When the two night supervisors accosted 16-year-old Dominik in the hallway, he knew that his attempted escape from boarding school had failed. Enraged, he raised the heavy stick he was carrying, beat one of the women to death and caused serious head injuries to the other.

Czech police arrested the youth in the school lavatories shortly afterwards. The case is almost routine. Police investigate 15,000 children and youths every year, many of whom are not even as old as Dominik.

The death of the 47-year-old supervisor in early February is merely the most recent link in a long chain of events that has shocked the Czech public. Just a week earlier, another 16-year-old youth seriously injured his pregnant teacher with an iron bar after he became angry over his poor marks.

In the middle of January, a similar grievance led two 14-year-olds to appear in class with a home-made bomb. The coincidental presence of the town's mayor prevented a catastrophe.

For a 16-year-old from the east of the country, however, no help was at hand. He jumped from the window of a tall building out of shame at his results.

"The young generation is living in a vacuum," says the country's Roman Catholic Archbishop, Miloslav Vlk.

"After the fall of communism, our society has

concentrated too much on external, especially economic, factors. We have forgotten to support moral values," the cardinal says, adding: "Without doubt Czech youth has ideals... but they lack roots."

Primary school teacher Ivo Havlicek has similar views.

"The old order disappeared in 1989, but a new one is not yet in sight," he says. "Young people are torn between these two poles — disorientated and simply unable to cope."

"Traditional societies belong to the past, but an intact family remains the best prevention against social instability,"

— Tomas Halik
Religious science professor Karlovy University

Conditions in the schools have not moved with the times — obsolete books, underpaid teachers, overlarge classes.

"The current generation comes to class armed and takes drugs during the breaks. School has long

since ceased to represent authority to them," says Havlicek.

Religious science professor at Prague's Karlovy University, Tomas Halik, sees the capacity of Czech educational institutions wasting away.

"Traditional societies belong to the past, but an intact family remains the best prevention against social instability," he says.

The rising consumer culture is, however, dominating the influence of the family, and the depiction of violence in the Czech media has an additional destructive effect, according to Halik.

President Vaclav Havel has also intervened in the discussion on violence in Czech schools. In a recent radio interview he attacked the exaggerated quest for profit in contemporary society as the reason for lack of interest in the younger generation.

The discussion was centred on reducing the age of penal responsibility instead of providing greater care for young people. Havel said, adding that this was certainly the wrong attitude.

The release of the most recent half-yearly results showed that the Czech public has become aware of recent events.

As most pupils were taking flowers to their teachers, in line with traditional Czech custom, a group of parents in Prague was calling for urgent reform.

"Otherwise we will soon be able to place the flowers on the graves of our children," they said.

— DPA Features.

Dar es Salaam police chief vows to whip bad drivers into line

The accident toll on Tanzania's roads continues to grow, wasting lives and causing huge economic losses. Frustrated at the failure of previous efforts to curb the problem, the head of police has now called for drastic measures to crack down on reckless driving.

By Alfred Mbogora

DAR ES SALAAM — Reckless drivers had better watch out if Tanzania's police chief gets his way.

"From now on, we shall have to whip on the spot all those drivers causing accidents due to negligence," said Omari Mahita, inspector general of police, after two serious bus crashes in January left 32 people dead.

The government was thinking of empowering officers to take the law into their hands, he said, as a means of curbing bad driving in a country reeling from a growing toll of death, injury and economic loss on the roads.

Current fines of 10,000 shillings and very rare jail sentences imposed on reckless drivers were not enough to deter them. But whipping them would put some sense into their heads, said Mahita at a meeting of traffic officers.

He called for a pilot crackdown to begin in Dar es Salaam. "His remarks provoked an outcry from the legal community and from bus operators."

"It was ridiculous for him to have uttered such words," said Hamis Ibrahim, an assistant law lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam. "Whipping of drivers on the spot is a contravention of human rights."

People had the right to a public court hearing before being sentenced, he said. Crooked police officers could misuse such pow-

ers to settle old scores or to demand money with menaces. Traffic police are over-

seriously injuring 48. The two drivers involved face a charge of causing death and injury through

Traffic police are overstretched and underpaid, and there are already complaints of officers taking bribes to turn a blind eye to vehicles that are overloaded or faulty.

stretched and underpaid, and there are already complaints of officers taking bribes to turn a blind eye to vehicles that are overloaded or faulty.

Mohammed Abdullah, chairman of the Tanzania Bus Owners' Association, pointed out: "They are demanding kickbacks even when a driver has not erred. Giving them such powers could be a source of embarrassment to the entire road-transport sector."

The angry reaction to Mahita's proposal prompted official statements that the inspector general had merely been speaking his mind and ordering officers into action.

Police did not carry whips, and no legislation empowering them to lash anybody was being prepared, according to the attorney general's office.

The police chief appears to have been speaking out of anger and frustration over the growing accident toll. President Benjamin Mkapa and Prime Minister Frederick Sumaye have both expressed concern at recent fatalities.

In the worst incident, in mid-January, a bus which had been racing alongside another overturned at Chalinze, near Dar es Salaam, killing 25 people and

reckless driving, which carries a maximum three-year jail sentence.

A week later, another bus overturned on a road between Morogoro and Coast region, killing seven people.

Earlier moves to curb the carnage have failed to produce results. In 1991, the government banned the overnight driving of long-distance passenger vehicles, and last year required all buses to be fitted with "speed governor" devices, which cut the fuel supply if a maximum pre-set is exceeded. They are easy to disconnect.

Accident figures, meanwhile, have risen from 12,327 reported crashes in 1992, killing 1,386 people and injuring 11,820, to 14,335 accidents last year, claiming 1,625 lives and injuring 12,490 people.

World Bank studies show the problem is costing Tanzania at least 15.5 billion shillings in economic losses per year — more than the government's current education budget of 14 billion shillings.

Dr. Daniel Ngowi, an economist with the United States Agency for International Development in Dar es Salaam, says the ratio of road casualties to the number of vehicles is 30 to 40

times higher than in many European countries. He would like to see a comprehensive road-safety programme. "A combination of good road construction, maintenance, education for road users and enforcement of traffic laws should be able to reduce accidents by at least 10 per cent," he said.

Dr. Iddi Mkalala, a motor-transport expert from the University of Dar es Salaam's engineering faculty, agrees. "Once the public and all road users are made to follow the traffic regulations, accidents will be brought down," he said.

There are currently only about 1,000 traffic police in a country of 30 million people. Road experts say more should be recruited and they should be better paid and properly trained and equipped.

The 1973 Traffic Act, widely regarded as being inadequate, is currently under review and could be amended by parliament later this year. Tougher penalties and improved driver training are proposed.

There have also been calls for drivers to be banned from using mobile phones — a practice blamed for a growing number of accidents in urban areas.

In addition, motoring experts are calling for investment in breathalysers to detect drunken motorists. Reckless driving is blamed for half of all crashes, and alcohol is thought to be a major cause. Breathalysers were introduced several years ago, but these have fallen into disrepair and have not been replaced.

The writer is a reporter with the Guardian, a daily newspaper published in Dar es Salaam.

— Gemini News.

Israel ready to pick up talks with Syria — report

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Assad conditioned the resumption of talks on Syrian approval for an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Mr. Netanyahu's media advisor David Bar-Ilan was not immediately available for comment on the report.

Israel has offered a condi-

tional withdrawal from south Lebanon to end its 13-year military presence there and the costly war it has been waging against Hizbollah guerrillas who operate in southern Lebanon. But both Lebanon and Syria rejected the offer.

Syria has long maintained that it would not favour a

deal that left out chances for a return of the Golan Heights to Syrian hands.

The Channel 2 report said Israel is hoping a promise to return the Syria talks to their previous track will gather Syrian endorsement for its offer to leave Lebanon.

Qatari emir on fence-mending visit to UAE

(Continued from page 1)

Qatar's links with the UAE deteriorated after Abu Dhabi hosted former Emir Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani following his ouster by his son in June 1995.

Ties took another plunge after Sheikh Zayed bitterly attacked Qatar late last year for its persistent campaigns against Egypt, which was accused of spearheading a drive to boycott the Middle East economic summit held

in November in Doha for the participation of Israel.

Diplomats said improvement of relations between the two Gulf states could help end Qatar's dispute with Cairo given its strong ties with the emirates, which also stayed away from the Middle East forum.

Qatar and the UAE are members of the 17-year-old Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) along with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman.

Qatar's ambassador to the UAE, Abdullah Al Othman, said Sheikh Hamad's trip followed calls by Sheikh Zayed to resolve inter-Arab rifts caused by the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and to readmit Baghdad into the Arab League.

"Relations between Qatar and the UAE are entering a new stage," he told the official UAE media. "I am sure that the people in both countries recognise the need to strengthen these relations."

Algeria: Les Citadelles lays down its arms

LES CITADELLES was the name Mahmoud Boumedjeria wanted to give his newspaper. He saw El Kilaa, a small regional weekly based in Tébessa, eastern Algeria, as a fortress, in particular because the town, which lies next to the Tunisian border and is the main passing point for traffickers in the east of the country, is the "ethnic capital" of the Algerian government.

Most leading members of the government come from that region. Although there is much talk nowadays of the press in Algeria, which is now totally controlled by central government, the regional press also has to cope with the wrath of the local authorities. In the case of El Kilaa, which upholds some of the views of Algeria's Muslim fundamentalists, the source of its difficulties has been the town's wali (chief administrator).

The first hint of trouble came on May 20, 1996, when managing editor Mahmoud Boumedjeria was placed under a committal order by the Tébessa court, then held for a week at the town's civilian

report that the wali had failed to attend an official ceremony, and the wali, who has a hand in all the workings of local government, gave the order for the arrests.

Less than a year later, on

court ordered the seizure on the say-so of the wali, and no official explanation was given to the newspaper management. El Kilaa had questioned the wali's running of municipal affairs on several occasions, and often mentioned the various kinds of trafficking that went on in the region. This time Boumedjeria decided to leave the country, and took the precaution of hiding some of the weekly's computers first because he felt matters could only get worse.

After taking refuge in Tunisia with his family, Boumedjeria was locked up at Harboub top-security jail, southern Tunisia, on March 28, 1997. He was arrested for "using false entry and exit stamps" on Tunisian territory. The Tunisian authorities gave no explanation for his detention. Three-and-a-half months later, on July 15, 1997, he was cleared by the

Médénine court, but was still detained for a time at the El Ouardia transit centre of the revolutionary guard, where he was subjected to harsh interrogation.

Frederic early August, he managed to return to Tébessa and tried once again to relaunch his newspaper. However, after only a few weeks he was forced to cease publication, a month before the start of Ramadan, because of financial pressure from the local authorities and the state-run Eastern Algeria Printing Works. Only the newspaper's supplement, El Jerida, which is printed in Séfif, continued to appear. Editor Lakhdar Khaifaoui, who had been receiving anonymous threatening phone calls, decided to throw in the towel.

— Reporters Sans Frontières Newsletter

AFM shrugs off concern over private sector firms dissolving saving funds

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Despite fears from a government draft law to "regulate" the savings funds of the private sector, the daily turnover at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) registered an increase following two weeks of decline, brokers said Saturday.

They said trading in the stock market amounted to JD3.46 million compared to the same day of last week when the turnover amounted JD1.3 million.

"Contrary to the last week's trading, the government draft law had no impact on the trading in the market," a broker who asked not to be named told the Jordan Times.

The broker was referring to a government proposed law to "regulate" the savings funds estimated at more than JD250 million.

Assurances of Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour that the proposed law will not harm the savings have failed to calm down the atmosphere and as most of the companies sought to liquidate the savings funds of their employees, the stock market was negatively affected.

The AFM trading during the past two weeks dropped as a reaction to the rumours that saving funds will liquidate their portfolios in the stock market. More than JD300 million are invested in shares.

The draft law drew wide range of criticism from the private sector, which described the government move as aiming at "controlling" these funds and endangering the savings of more than 150,000 employees.

The broker indicated that most of the trading focused on the Arab Bank, the Kingdom's largest financial institution.

"The bulk of the Arab Bank trading, which totalled JD2.2 million, involved transfer of the shares rather than an actual sale," another broker said.

He added that trading in Housing Bank shares amounted to JD233,610.

The banking sector won the lion's share of the turnover with a volume of

JD2.2 million followed by the services sector with JD737,216. The industry sector took JD207,930 and the insurance sector accounted for JD17,258.

The daily AFM bulletin showed that out of the 67 firms that changed hands in the market, 24 companies recorded increase in prices, 22 registered decrease and 21 recorded no change.

Meanwhile, several companies said are considering requests by their employees to liquidate their savings for fear of the proposed law.

Mohammad Sayid, deputy chairman of the saving fund of the Jordan Electricity Company (JEC), told the Jordan Times that several appeals were received from members of the funds to liquidate their savings.

"The inclination is to liquidate the fund which totals JD9.5 million. But we will wait until April when the general assembly of the company will meet to decide whether to liquidate it or not," he said.

Mr. Sayid said that lack of confidence exist between the management operating the saving funds and the government.

"Why should the government want to regulate the funds while it has failed to run many public sector firms. He who suffers from incompetence is not able to prescribe remedies for others," Mr. Sayid said.

Bar Association President Hussein Mjalli said he expected to head a meeting of the 50-member legal committee of the association on Saturday evening to formulate a memo in response to the government's draft law.

Mr. Mjalli said the memo will represent not only his association but all professional unions and "will be presented to the upcoming meeting with a government committee which has formulated the draft law."

The professional unions are opposing the draft law and threatened that they will liquidate their funds if the government went ahead in their draft law.

Higher income tax under discussion in Lebanon

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's government and businesses are discussing a possible rise in income tax to generate revenue and tackle the budget deficit, a Lebanese businessman has said.

"In discussions today there are possibilities...we are now doing 10 (per cent), let's increase it to 15," Jacques Sarraf, president of the Association of Lebanese Industrialists, told Reuters.

"We know that they (the government) need revenues and we have to be active on that. We want to help our country."

Prime Minister Rafik Hariri said the government would seek cabinet and parliament approval for a one per cent tax on business turnover which has been opposed by the business community.

Mr. Sarraf said the turnover tax should at least be postponed until a better solution was found.

"We believe that it (income tax hike) is a better solution than the one per cent turnover tax," he said.

Lebanon had introduced a low tax structure — a maximum rate of 10 per cent on both business and personal income — at the end of 1993, hoping it would improve the business climate.

But the government, which is launching a \$2 billion foreign borrowing programme, has faced increasing pressure to cut its deficit.

Several international rating agencies have warned of a possible downgrade if the government fails to act.

Mr. Hariri's government ran a deficit of revenue

against expenditure of 59 per cent in 1997 and started this year at 45 per cent in January.

However, Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh said last week he expected a 30 per cent deficit for the first two months in 1998, well inside the 42 per cent target for the year.

Mr. Sarraf also said the government should seek additional means of raising revenues, such as slightly increasing petrol prices — an idea that proved to be one of the most volatile issues in parliament.

"The consumer can easily absorb 500-1000 pounds (32-65 cents) (per 20 litres)," he said.

Mr. Sarraf said the government could also raise customs duties on luxury goods such as whisky and cigars to cut the deficit.

Iranian economy threatened by falling oil prices

TEHRAN (AFP) — The Iranian economy, heavily dependent on oil exports, is suffering from the fall in crude prices, as the country goes through a deep recession.

The Iranian currency, the rial, has already fallen by around five to seven per cent against major currencies on the black market in reaction to the plunge in oil prices.

The dollar which traded around 4,700 rials until two months ago has now approached 5,000 rials and "the drop in oil prices could further push down the rial in the coming days," the English-language newspaper Iran News has said.

The governor of the central bank, Mohsen Nurbakhsh, said the government may have to review the budget for next year which started Saturday, if oil prices continued to plummet.

"Some modifications will be needed if oil prices continue to decline," he said.

Oil exports make up around 80 per cent of Iran's hard currency earnings and 36.5 per cent of the budget.

Mr. Nurbakhsh said the government faced a budget deficit of six trillion rials (\$2 billion) for the year which ended on March 20.

The figure had previously been put at \$2.6 billion.

The government had initially calculated to earn \$17.5 from the sale of each barrel of crude in its draft budget for

next year, but the parliament reduced the figure to \$16.

Many experts still dispute the target price as "unrealistic."

"Our officials are unable to properly assess the economic realities of the international oil market," the Iran News complained.

Oil prices have fallen to four-year-lows after the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) decided in November to raise the output ceiling by 10 per cent.

The Iranian economy is already going through a recession, prompted by a series of protectionist measures taken by the central bank to check soaring inflation.

Inflation, according to official figures, has dropped to 20 per cent, but at the cost of a halt to many development projects and a sharp drop in investment.

Mr. Nurbakhsh put the economic growth rate at three per cent this year, which is almost half of that registered for early 1990s, when the country borrowed heavily to import goods and undertake development projects.

But the government has been tightening its belt since 1995 when a range of regulations were imposed to curb imports to save money to pay back a foreign debt of around \$30 billion.

Mr. Nurbakhsh said Iran still owed \$26.4 billion.

To compensate for falling oil revenues, the government has also taken measures to encourage non-oil exports, which are also stagnant leading to a crisis in the industrial and agricultural sectors.

The current recession has further cut the public's purchasing power in a country where average salaries are below \$100 a month.

Kar-Kargar, a newspaper representing state labour unions, said the average family in big cities faced a budget deficit of 23 per cent.

The economy is the greatest challenge facing the new government of President Mohammad Khatami, who was elected in a landslide in May promising economic prosperity.

But few expect a miracle from a government which runs around 85 per cent of the economy, plagued with inefficiency and corruption.

In the early 1990s, the government started a drive to privatise industry, but there have been growing complaints that the transfers are marked by nepotism.

The private sector has shown little interest in investing given strict labour laws, red tape and government regulations which keep changing.

"Our officials continue to gloss over economic realities, lack proper planning and they wait for a miracle to happen," said the Iran News.

Mulki: Ministry still considering amendments to insurance law

AMMAN (J.T.) — Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Hani Al Mulki Saturday said the ministry is currently considering amendments proposed by the private sector to the new insurance law.

Dr. Mulki added that the new amendments will be presented to the Cabinet in final form after discussing them and obtaining the agreement of the private sector.

In a statement to the Arabic daily Al Ra'i, Dr. Mulki said dialogue on the proposed new law is ongoing, noting that further discussion will follow in order to come up with an acceptable formula to the various parties concerned including the government, private sector, and the citizens. Dr. Mulki emphasised that the ministry seeks to formulate a modern law capable of meeting the aspirations of the various parties concerned.

"The government does not consider the text of the law as final, and will amend the parts needing changes," he stressed. Asked about insurance charges, Dr. Mulki said the floating premiums should be preceded by a reorganisation process to avoid any gaps or shortcomings which may hinder the development of the insurance sector.

AFDB lends Egypt \$28m

ABIDJAN (R) — The African Development Bank (AFDB) said it had signed a cooperation deal with the government of Egypt and was also lending the country around \$28 million for two projects.

The cooperation deal will allow the bank to work with the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa (FECTA) on projects, the first agreement of its type with one of its African shareholders.

The bank's soft loan arm is providing \$28.6 million for Egypt, including a small gift element, for a project aimed at creating jobs in small firms and labour-intensive activities and a second project to help small companies run by women.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) The thing you and your friends want to do turns out to be too expensive. Don't give up your dream, but do find another source of income. It's likely you'll come up with a creative idea tonight. An older person, somebody you don't always agree with, is most likely to think of it. Accept suggestion from everybody.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) An offer you accept first thing this morning can work out well. Later in the day, it will be hard to get agreement on anything. That'll be true with your friends, your boss even your spouse. Hang on a little longer. More money should become available tomorrow. After that, you'll notice things loosening up.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your sweetheart makes a demand this morning that will hardly thrill you. It's one of those "if you loved me, you'd..." kind of things. In this case, it wouldn't be such a bad idea to comply. It won't cost you that much, and it means quite a bit to the other person.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) A loved one will give you excellent advice today. It's important to listen and learn. You don't need to do what he or she says. Just accept the coaching and make the decision. Well, that's the idea, anyway. Actually, you might be able to get away with letting the other person make a couple of the decisions, too.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Somebody at home is an anchor around your neck today. He or she won't go along with your ideas, perhaps for good reason. That makes it even more infuriating, since you and a partner are convinced you're right. Instead of being upset, listen. Your antagonist may see something you're avoiding.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) The pace is picking up, and by tomorrow it's full speed ahead. Right now you have some time to practise and ponder. Everybody thinks you know everything, and that's fine with you. The truth is that you have to study just like everybody else, and this is the day to do it. Don't fall into the trap of simply reading comic books.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) If you do a little research, you might find a good deal on something about buying real estate? If so, you need to do the homework first. You do the homework and you have a better chance of getting the home.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're strong, energetic and exceptionally good-looking. You'll need every bit of that extra energy to get what you want. To outwit a stubborn roommate, encourage his or her outrageous side. This person will get so crazy, you'll have free reign. You'll be the only sane one left. **SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) Some people can be so stubborn. Your problem is that you try to please everybody. Today, that's going to be really difficult. Why don't you just please the one who signs your paycheques and worry about the other one later?

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Schedule a breakfast date as early as possible. During the middle of the day, there will be conflict, and that's not a good time to go shopping. Well, you can if you're careful about your spending. Only go shopping with a person who's tighter with money than you are.

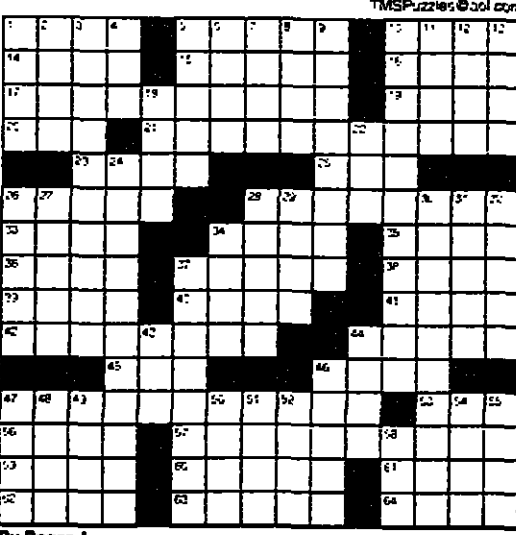
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You're in a strong position. If you're in a conflict with a Scorpio, however, be careful. Scorpions like to be in control at all times, or they tend to get a little nasty. Show your mastery by letting this person have what he or she wants. Only if it's legal and within reason, of course.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) There might be a battle raging out there. It could involve a friend who lives far away, who's upset at being unable to do everything he or she wants. You can counsel your friend to lighten up a little bit, and that's a good idea. Do what you can to help.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

1 Across
5 Cork population
10 Rose of baseball
14 Grape
15 Domingo
16 River of Russia
17 Satanic
19 Comic Rudner
20 Take a chair
21 Formal and haughty
25 Opinion page, briefly
26 Obtained
28 Played again
29 Word for word
33 Eastern bigwig
34 Unconscious condition
35 Wall St. grp.
36 Paycheck deduction fig.
37 Big name in fairy tales
38 Angry states
39 Jack, of old movies
40 Corsia
41 "... Mia"
42 Assign to an obscure place
44 Diminishes
45 Nasty disturbance
46 Baking chamber
47 Tube-shaped
53 Fiendish little one
56 Secular
57 Austere
59 pedala
60 Pennsylvania Dutch
61 Euro-American alliance, abbr.
62 Arrangement
63 "Zai" mechanic
64 Otter, once

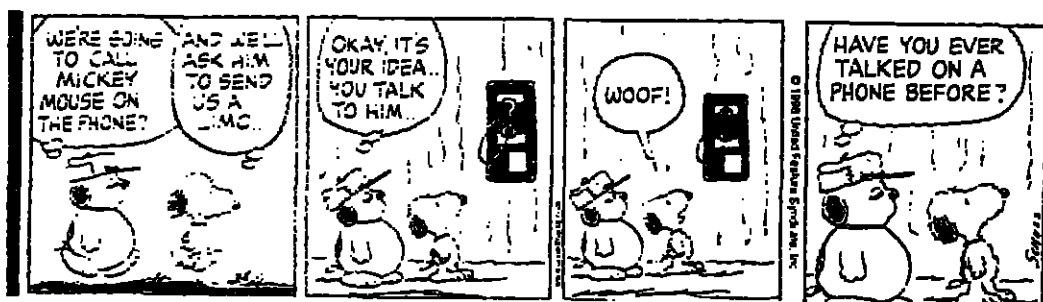


By Roger Jurgovani
Potomac, MD

5 Stranded after a shipwreck, maybe
6 Surprise attack
7 Machu Picchu
8 Lonesome
9 3-D picture
10 Marked by stern morality
11 Stoltz of "Mask"
12 See-ya!
13 Airline to Tel
18 Shop sign
22 Goody mass
24 Of EMS treatment
26 Pass on (to)
27 M. Zola
28 Put into words
29 Madame
30 Bony's name
31 Despoiled
32 Flat-top hats
34 R. Ebert or G. Siskel, e.g.
37 Severe form of epilepsy

43 ... and tone
44 Drop
46 Buckwheat groats
47 Earth lump
48 Ivy League school
49 Address Kedrova
50 Fellini film
51 Laverne's L, e.g.
52 Wooden barrel
54 Spouse
55 Farm implement
56 Election winners

Peanuts



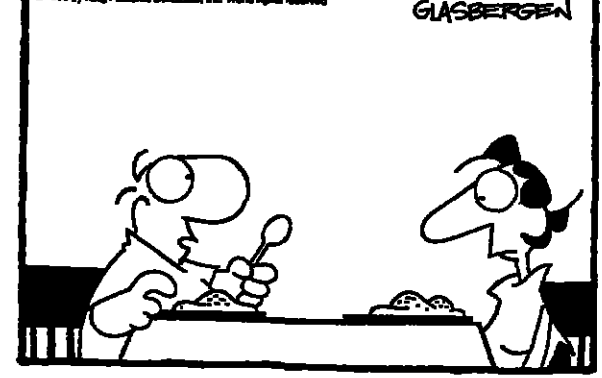
Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



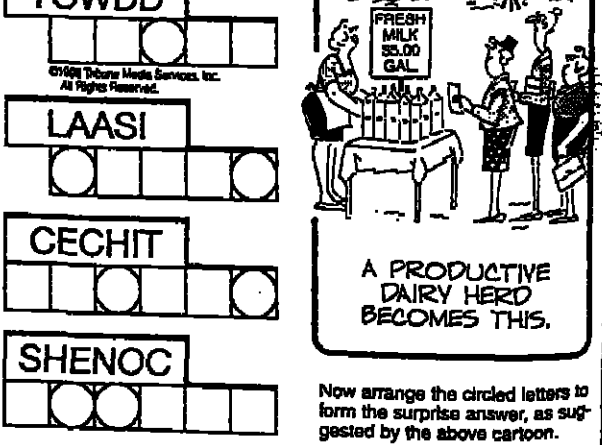
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"I couldn't find all the ingredients for salmon mousse, so I improvised. It's pudding mixed with tuna fish."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Print answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumble: THINK DAILY COUPON GIGLO
Answer: With a degree in astronomy the student's future was this — LOOKING UP

THE BUSINESS

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	GBP
1 Dollar	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Euro	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Pound	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Swiss Franc	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Japanese Yen	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Australian Dollar	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Canadian Dollar	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 New Zealand Dollar	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Hong Kong Dollar	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Singapore Dollar	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Thai Baht	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Indonesian Rupiah	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Malaysian Ringgit	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Philippine Peso	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Vietnamese Dong	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 South African Rand	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 South Korean Won	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Taiwan Dollar	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Chinese Yuan	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Russian Ruble	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Ukrainian Hryvnia	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Polish Zloty	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Czech Koruna	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Slovak Koruna	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Hungarian Forint	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Romanian Leu	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Bulgarian Lev	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Moldovan Leu	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Georgian Lari	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Armenian Dram	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Azerbaijani Manat	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Kyrgyzstani Som	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Tajikistani Somoni	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Uzbekistani Som	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Kazakhstani Tenge	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Russian Ruble	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Ukrainian Hryvnia	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Polish Zloty	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Czech Koruna	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Slovak Koruna	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Hungarian Forint	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Romanian Leu	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Bulgarian Lev	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Moldovan Leu	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Georgian Lari	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Armenian Dram	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Azerbaijani Manat	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Kyrgyzstani Som	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Tajikistani Somoni	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Uzbekistani Som	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736
1 Kazakhstani Tenge	1.0000	0.7054	2.4636	0.6736

Energy

Commodity	Last	Delivery
Oil (WTI)	14.30	\$ per barrel
Gas (Henry Hub)	1.35	\$ per MMBtu
Coal (Brazos)	1.35	\$ per ton
Wood (Wisconsin)	1.35	\$ per cord
Hydro (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Nuclear (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Solar (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Wind (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Geothermal (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Biofuel (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Hydrogen (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Fusion (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Antimatter (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Dark Energy (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Dark Matter (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Neutrinos (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Gravitons (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Photons (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Electrons (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Protons (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Neutrons (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Quarks (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Gluons (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
W Bosons (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Z Bosons (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh
Higgs Bosons (New York)	1.35	\$ per MWh

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan Kuwait Bank allocates JD1.5m to expand business outside Jordan

ALTHOUGH THE Jordan Kuwait Bank (JKB) achieved a JD3.13 million gross profit last year compared to JD1.56 million in 1996, the bank will not distribute any dividends to shareholders, JKB Chairman Abdul Karim Kabariti has said. He indicated that net profit after tax amounted to JD2.47 million of which JD1.5 million were allocated as a reserve for setting up branches outside Jordan.

Mr. Kabariti, a former prime minister, described 1997 as a transitional year and a fundamental turning point for the bank. He said that the second half of last year witnessed the start of a young but rather strong stage in response to the wishes of the founding Kuwaiti members to lay down a new strategy to reorganise the bank and consolidate the objectives for which it was set up in 1976.

The chairman pointed out that the bank succeeded over the past few months to launch a fundamental restructuring programme that covered the management, the capital base, the future strategy and the control standards in addition to the organisational, technical and investment structure related to the services and products provided by the bank.

Mr. Kabariti revealed that JKB assets grew by 11.8 per cent, or JD33 million, to reach JD312 million and that the portfolio of credit facilities rose by JD10 million, or seven per cent, noting that the total direct facilities for the whole of the banking system rose by no more than 1.6 per cent. Such a minimal growth was due to lower credit extension in dinars and higher lending in foreign currency, Mr. Kabariti said.

He added that deposits by clients increased by JD18 million, or eight per cent to reach JD240 million, pointing out that the growth in customers' deposits in the banking sector did not exceed 6.6 per cent. In terms of quality, the chairman wrote to the shareholders that during the second half of last year, JKB went after widening the base of clients who enjoy high network and are active in productive businesses.

Mr. Kabariti concluded by stressing that the bank will continue restructuring procedures and planning new policies of comprehensive development objectives in 1998. He specifically mentioned expanding the diversifying the investment tools and activating the role of the treasury as well as investments in the money and capital markets operations. Furthermore, JKB will develop and provide new products such as the point-of-sale services and "home" banking services designed for specific sectors.

The final remark given by Mr. Kabariti was that JKB would this year finalise the process to transform the bank into a comprehensive bank according to the standards set by the Central Bank (Al Dostour).

Most banks in Jordan fail to improve performance

By Hasher Majoka
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A turbulent regional political situation combined with a weak local credit demand kept the overall performance of Jordan's banking sector from improving in 1997, despite an easing of monetary policy by the Central Bank, leading bankers said Saturday ahead of official release of the performance figures for the year.

"Major banks are expected to declare a net profit increase of 15 per cent on average even though the figure for the entire sector of

over 20 banks, already stagnant at around JD85 million for past two years, is unlikely to change," Ziad Basha, securities manager at the British Bank told the Jordan Times.

"The Central Bank eased up the monetary policy in part by decreasing the interest rates thus creating excess liquidity in the market," he said. "The resulting historical lag between low deposit interest rates and relatively high credit interest rates benefited the major banks that have sufficient capital base," he added.

"Despite the lowering of interest rates there was no

major capital outflow. Instead we witnessed a major capital inflow through the Amman Financial Market and in anticipation of an impending privatisation drive," Mr. Basha explained.

Mufleh Aqel, the regional manager at the Arab Bank, felt that the lowering of interest rates was not very helpful since "demand for the credit in the Jordanian economy was just not strong."

"Uncertainty over the peace process and the volatile situation in Iraq combined with a tight government fiscal policy and a strong emphasis on export

driven industries kept the credit demand down in the economy," he said.

"We have a situation where macro-economic indicators for the Jordanian economy are all very positive. The savings are rising, the gross domestic product (GDP) is increasing and the trade deficit is narrowing. However the micro-economic situation suffers in part from a restricted government spending," he added.

Mr. Basha seemed to concur: "Macro-economically, Jordan has surpassed the IMF adjustment programme (objectives), but personal disposable income has

dropped thus restricting expenditure to basic requirements," he said.

"Many traders are overstocked at the moment, especially the automobile sector. Furthermore, banks are in general experiencing delays in repayments," he added.

"Smaller banks have to merge in order to survive. They are not even able to compete with the larger banks without the globalisation of our banking sector let alone compete against the international expertise of the newer institutions," Mr. Basha said.

Housing Bank decides to double capital to JD100m

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Housing Bank, the Kingdom's second largest financial institution, has decided to double its capital to JD100 million in a move aimed at enhancing the bank's status in the country, a bank's spokesman said Saturday.

The bank's director general, Abdul Qadir Dweik, said the JD50 million will be secured through the capitalisation of premiums collected from issuing

shares. "This step is part of the Housing Bank's strategy that aims at strengthening the capital to become the largest commercial bank in the country," Mr. Dweik told the Jordan Times.

"This strategy is aimed at making the bank ready to the new era which requires strong commercial banks ahead of the Kingdom's partnership with the European Union and the expected entry to the World Trade Organisation (WTO)," he added.

"It also aimed at

enhancing the bank's role in financing the projects expected to be launched in the Kingdom as part of the peace process in the region," Mr. Dweik said.

He emphasised that the decision will be discussed by the general assembly of the bank during its meeting on April 21 to get the final approval before approaching the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Jordan Central Bank and the Securities Commission.

The new step comes less than a year after the

bank decided to double its capital from JD25 million to JD50 million.

Last year, the Kingdom's largest financial institution, the Arab Bank has decided to double its capital from JD44 million to JD88 million.

The Arab Bank, which maintains assets of more than JD21 billion, is running a financial empire that spreads over more than 30 countries worldwide, while the Housing Bank is operating only in Jordan and the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Mr. Dweik said the

bank has launched a "restructuring programme that would enable the bank's branches to extend more services to clients."

He said that deposits at the bank have reached JD214 million while assets are estimated at JD1.35 billion.

Mr. Dweik said the bank recorded JD9 million in profits in the first two months of this year after having recorded a net profit of JD16 million last year compared with a JD8 million in 1996, he added.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.8315	0.6963	0.7036	130.10	1.4175	1802.00	2.0634	6.1350
DE Mark	0.5460	1.0000	0.3271	0.3180	71.02	0.7737	933.62	1.1298	3.4393
GB Sterling	1.5685	3.0582	1.0000	2.4897	217.09	2.3851	3006.64	3.4428	10.2362
CH Franc	0.6875	1.2217	0.3997	1.0000	86.80	0.9455	1201.97	137.63	4.0922
JP Yen	0.0077	1.4072	0.4604	1.1611	1.0000	1.0891	13.85	188.54	4.7138
CA Dollar	0.7055	1.2916	0.4225	1.0586	1.09	1.0000	1270.80	1.4551	4.3265
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0168	0.3323	0.8331	1387.15	0.7882	1.0000	11.44	3.4027
NL Guilder	0.4848	0.8874	0.2903	0.7261	63.01	0.6869	873.10	1.0000	2.9725
FR Franc	0.1630	0.2985	0.0976	0.2416	21.18	0.2210	33.63	33.6300	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7080	3.7507	0.3770	3.6400	0.3064	3.6728	1627.70	3.4160
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2901	0.5317	5.1340	0.4307	5.1800	2164.72	4.8181
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0814	0.88	407.31	0.9108
Bahrain Dinar	2.46	1.8806	9.9488	1.0000	9.86	0.8099	9.74	4082.25	9.0610
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0304	1.0304	1.0000	0.0839	1.01	419.70	0.9385
Kuwait Dinar	3.2749	2.3219	12.2833	1.2346	11.92	12.03	5003.11	0.9385	0.9385
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1931	1.0213	1.0227	0.9911	0.0831	1.00	415.97	0.9301
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4641	2.4851	0.2468	2.3827	0.1999	2.4040	1.00	2.2380
Egyptian	0.2927	0.2076	1.0580	0.1104	1.0586	0.0894	1.0781	447.22	1.0000

Energy									
Oil	Last	Review							
Brent	12.38	12.39							
W. Texas	14.27	14.39							
Bonny	12.38	12.26							
Dubai	10.85	10.90							
UL Gas	138.00	138.00							

Metal Prices									
Metal	Bid	Offer							
Gold (oz's)	291.6	292							
Silver (oz's)	8.21	8.24							
Platinum (oz's)	411	413							
AL (3 Months)	1451	1454							
CU (3 Months)	1762	1767							
Zinc (3 Months)	1081	1086							
Lead (3 Months)	563	566							
NI (3 Months)	6806	6835							

Energy									
Commodity	Last	Delivery							
Coffee (c/lbs)	148.33	Spot							
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1868	Spot							
Sugar (\$/ton)	273.5	Spot							
Wheat (\$/ton)	85	Spot							
Soya (c/lbs)	27.33	Spot							
Tea (c/lbs/kg)	165	Spot							
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot							
Rice (\$/ton)	400	Spot							

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	Buy	Sell							
US Dollar	0.708	0.710							
GB Sterling	1.1793	1.1852							
DE Mark	0.386	0.3879							
CH Franc	0.472	0.4744							
FR Franc	0.1152	0.1158							
JP Yen	0.5435	0.5462							
NI Guilder	0.3427	0.3444							
IT Lira	0.3922	0.3942							

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER - AMMAN - JORDANIAN											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 21/03/1998											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
346.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	13.8	1.18	38	6440	2216030	337.00	338.00	1.00+	
2.340	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	4	1250	2113	1.72	1.69	-0.03-	
5.300	4.650	JOR. PETROL. RESERVARY	29.0	0.00	12	47712	233610	4.88	4.85	-0.03-	
4.180	1.820	JOR. KUNAT BANK	9	0.00	8	3557	10516	1.90	1.90	0.00	
4.020	1.960	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.1	4.82	9	2350	4662	1.97	1.99	-0.02+	
1.400	800	BEIT AL-HAL (BEITWA)	6	16.67	1	250	225	0.89	0.90	-0.01+	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 233.92 CHNG: -0.10											
4.150	3.800	JERUSALEM INSUR.	10.5	5.17	1	4000	15480	3.87	3.87	-	
2.400	1.590	JOR. FREEMER INSUR.	5.5	12.76	3	800	1568	1.99	1.96	-0.03-	
2.350	1.800	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.4	5.00	1	100	210	2.05	2.10	-0.05+	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 121.61 CHNG: -0.10											
2.160	3.550	JOR. ELECTRICITY	9.6	4.95	7	2659	5364	2.02	2.02	-	
4.030	1.120	IRSID ELECTRICITY	12.8	5.35	1	108	108	2.14	2.15	-0.01+	
1.550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	42.3	0.00	17	9350	9834	1.05	1.06	-0.01+	
9.350	6.700	KALAM	9.4	6.52	1	150	1380	9.29	9.20	-0.09-	
1.480	1.150	NAT. EAST INDUST.	17.7	0.00	2	200	234	1.17	1.16	-0.01-	
4.600	2.890	JOR. INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.8	1.84	11	3150	13749	4.37	4.35	-0.02-	
1.090	900	ZARQA EDUCATION	9	0.00	3	1500	1412	0.94	0.95	-0.01+	
1.830	1.570	UNIFIED CO.	7.0	6.56	2	1250	1975	1.58	1.58	-	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 119.33 CHNG: -0.18											
1.160	930	ATTARQUEB	9	0.00	1	3100	3410	1.13	1.10	-0.03-	
4.450	2.690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.7	3.96	42	17063	47019	2.78	2.78	-	
0.090	5.620	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.2	3.27	12	9600	56553	5.90	5.85	-0.05-	
11.150	9.200	JOR. PETROL. RESERVARY	10.3	8.39	11	3190	38892	10.46	10.46	-0.14+	
6.700	4.500	JORDAN TANNING	8.8	7.27	3	1975	10839	5.50	5.50	-	
2.480	1.120	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AGR.	9	0.00	19	8881	6996	1.12	1.13	-0.01+	
7.350	5.800	JOR. NORTHERN HILLS	19.2	3.16	4	30700	194080	6.40	6.32	-0.08-	
5.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	14.3	3.85	67	19873	102941	5.13	5.19	-0.06+	
1.530	1.020	JOR. PIPES MANFCT.	15.1	6.56	3	1900	2318	1.24	1.22	-0.02-	
3.010	2.650	JOR. PAPER CARBON	14.3	0.00	2	260	660	2.66	2.54	-0.12-	
1.420	1.150	UNIV. HOSN	9	0.00	1	180	180	1.84	1.82	-0.02-	
6.350	4.400	DAR ALDAMA DV. INV.	15.0	4.08	9	4122	25017	6.07	6.12	-0.05+	
3.460	2.220	ARAB ALUM.	9	3.37	6	1000	1000	2.70	2.70	-	
1.590	400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.6	0.00	65	91350	45281	4.8	5.0	-0.02+	
1.100	650	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	2	250	162	65	64	-0.01-	
630	510	NATIONAL INDUS.	9	0.00	7	1000	560	57	58	-0.01-	
920	720	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	15	11850	5096	43	43	-	
750	500	JOR. ROCKWELL INDUS.	9	0.00	8	14000	7720	55	53	-0.02-	
3.000	920	NATL. CABLES WIRE. HFAC	28.7	0.0	5	1100	1291	1.16	1.19	-0.03+	
750	590	JOR. SILICO. CHEM.	9	0.00	2	1100	610	620	610	-	
1.560	1.150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	17.1	5.22	12	7850	10573	1.33	1.34	-0.01-	
1.670	810	UNIV. MODN. INDUS.	P	0.00	63	45820	48041	1.07	1.05	-0.02-	
1.410	690	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	10.6	12.66	17	20800	16284	7.4	7.4	-	
1.620	1.350	NAT. PETRO. CHEM.	14.0	0.00	5	2300	3404	1.49	1.48	-0.01-	
1.080	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	18.7	0.00	13	13250	13515	1.02	1.02	-	
1.880	1.290	EL -RAY READY WEAR	48.2	0.00	3	1000	1369	1.35	1.37	-0.02+	
1.250	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	9	0.00	13	14877	14877	1.18	1.18	-	
1.220	850	JORDAN CS. & WEG.	46.0	0.00	11	5600	5739	1.02	1.03	-0.01+	
1.850	660	JORDAN STEEL	35.7	6.33	9	15950	12601	79	79	-	
820	570	MTD. EAST COMPLEX	7.9	15.63	18	92500	59060	64	64	-	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 110.73 CHNG: -0.22											
GRAND TOTAL											
INDEX: 167.53 CHNG: -0.02											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 21/03/1998											
N	1.050	-910	EXPORT & FIN. BAK. 751	17.2	0.00	2	2000	1360	.94	.93	-0.01-
N	530	-340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9	0.00	14	29650	11564	.39	.39	-
N	700	-480	NATL. COMMER. CENTERS	9	0.00	6	2023	1325	.68	.66	-0.02-
N	800	-660	UNIV. INV. 501	9	0.00	1	7400	7400	.74	.74	-
N	500	-360	ARAB FTK. INVEST	0.00	0.00	27	76400	34380	.43	.45	-0.02+
N	780	-610	AL-BANILAT 751	65.3	0.00	7	34800	16575	.71	.68	-0.03-
N	290	-130	JOR. INDUS. MATCH-VEHCO	9	0.00	7	15950	1895	.13	.12	-0.01-
N	740	-440	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	1	1000	470	.46	.47	-0.01+
N	470	-240	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	41.5	0.00	45	152900	59042	.34	.36	-0.02+
N	530	-380	INTL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	2	1000	350	.35	.35	-
N	750	-560	ARAB INTL. INV. HANICO	9	0.00	24	54540	22606	.39	.39	-
N	730	-550	RAZI PHARM.	9	0.00	7	4177	2987	.71	.71	-
N	460	-240	INDS. EMG.	19	0.00	12	32520	10576	.29	.30	-0.01+
N	510	-300	INDS. CHEMATIC	9	0.00	1	100	53	.52	.53	-0.01+
N	950	-550	ADVANCED PAPER. IND.	9	0.00	8	5724	3647	.63	.64	-0.01+
N	740	-490	NATL. POULTRY	9	0.00	2	5660	27853	.50	.49	-0.01-
N	950	-470	OFFICIALS HANING 751	9	0.00	4	2500	875	.60	.60	-
N	1.000	-660	NAT. ALUMINIUM. 751	94.6	0.00	2	577	248	.68	.68	-
N	1.100	-720	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	54.9	0.00	1	1050	1050	1.00	1.00	-
N	1.000	-750	EXRBL. PRINT CO. 751	13.7	8.42	11	19500	15675	.90	.90	-
GRAND TOTAL											
212 509808 207933											

Cash and contract woes bedevil Russian squad

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Russian Football Union (RFU) and national squad are at loggerheads over contracts and payments for the qualifying round of the 2000 European Championship.

"We don't care much about the prize money, as these sums could hardly be compared with our club's contract money, but we want the RFU to fulfil its side of the agreements," said the Russian team's midfielder Andrei Kanchelskis.

"We just want everything to be clear in our relations with the RFU," he told the Sport Express daily.

RFU deputy president Nikita Simonyan said the RFU was suffering "serious financial problems" and that made them draw up a contract which doesn't satisfy the players.

Intensive discussions are expected between the national squad and the country's football governing body in the run-up to a friendly match against France in Moscow Wednesday.

For the European Championship qualifiers the RFU offered a team contract with financial conditions similar to those included in contracts for the 1998 World Cup qualifying matches.

According to those conditions, the national players were entitled to full prize money only if they got through the qualifying round for France 98.

Italy's 1-0 victory over Russia in Napoli meant the players got just a small percentage of sum they could get in case of the victory.

That disappointment led many in

Russia to expect serious changes in the country's national football, especially after the government expressed concern about the team's unsatisfactory performance.

But nothing happened. Vyacheslav Koloskov remains president of the RFU and Boris Ignatyev's role as chief national coach was extended.

"I was spending too long selecting players to form the core of the national team, and that was my main mistake in the previous qualifying round," Ignatyev told reporters recently.

"We didn't solve our main task and didn't perform our best, but I don't blame the players."

"I can only get the national team together for 35 days a year and this is not enough for me to form an impressive combat-ready unit," he said.

Ignatyev said many national team players lost their will to win by playing for low-ranking foreign clubs.

"I cannot expect a winning spirit from (Yury) Nikiforov, for instance," Ignatyev said, referring to the Russian defender who plays for Spanish strugglers Sporting Gijon.

"He has got used to two or three goals being scored against the Sporting defence in every game," the Russian national coach added.

Ignatyev said another problem was that the RFU "cannot even provide insurance for the players — we don't have the money for it."

Tunisian club Esperance close in on hat-trick

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — African Cup-Winners Cup favourites Esperance of Tunisia moved a step closer to an historic club hat-trick Friday when they beat Stade Malien 1-0 in the first round, first leg in Tunis.

Sami Laaroussi's 20th minute goal was just enough to separate the teams on the day.

But the Tunis team, bidding to add the Nelson Mandela Cup to a list of honours that includes the 1994 Champions League and 1997 CAF Cup, still have to negotiate the away leg in Mali in a fortnight.

The club has won all three continental trophies and only Esperance and compatriots Etoile du Sahel can achieve the feat this year, with Esperance more likely to succeed.

While Etoile must overcome giants like Al-Ahly of Egypt and Raja Casablanca of Morocco in the Champions League, Esperance stand out among potential Cup-winners Cup winners.

The Tunisian line-up is laced with national players, including midfielder Hassan Gabri, whose consistently good performances at the Nations Cup last month earned him a place among the African All-Stars.

Chokri al-Ouaer is a long-serving goalkeeper, Tarek Thabet and Taoufik Herichi experienced defenders, Gabri attacks from the right flank and Ziad Tlemcani was the leading 1997 CAF Cup scorer with six goals.

Teams who could wreck the Esperance dream include Ismailia of Egypt, Premiero Agosto of Angola, USMA of Algeria and Wydad Casablanca of Morocco with Sundowns of South Africa potential dark horses.

Ismailia can call on national team midfielder Ahmed Hassan and look set for a convincing home victory over preliminary-round qualifiers Red Sea from Eritrea.

Premiero Agosto host Notwane of Botswana in a rematch of a 1997 Champions League encounter the Angolans won 3-2 on aggregate while USMA and Wydad received byes.

Sundowns, an expensively assembled team poised to win the South African championship, entertain Stars, a Tanzanian lower division club that defeated Bata Bullets of Malawi in the eliminators.

Newcastle chief fails in bid to gag newspaper

LONDON (AFP) —

Disgraced Newcastle United chairman Freddy Shepherd tonight failed in a legal bid to stop the News of the World tabloid publishing more allegations about him, the newspaper said.

Mr. Shepherd sought an injunction in the Chancery Division of the High Court in London to prevent the newspaper from publishing further revelations this weekend about his alleged behaviour and that of Newcastle vice-chairman, Doug Hall, in Marbella (Spain) a fortnight ago.

But after a three-hour hearing Mr. Justice Lindsay rejected Mr. Shepherd's case, said the News of the World.

The move came as Mr. Hall made clear that he had no intention of resigning.

His solicitor Gerard Tyrrell, who acts for Douglas and his father Sir John Hall, told that his client had "no plans to resign".

The decision came after speculation over the future of Mr. Hall and Mr. Shepherd after newspaper claims that they had mocked the club's fans, as well as their star striker Alan Shearer and the female population of the North East.

Mr. Tyrrell, of Harbottle and Lewis in London, stressed that he spoke only for Mr. Hall and not for Mr. Shepherd.

The position of Mr. Shepherd remained unclear on Friday evening. Earlier reports suggested he would also stay on.

But his solicitor, Michael Winkell, said that no statement had been made on behalf of his client and he refused to confirm that Mr. Shepherd was intent on staying at the club.

Knicks beat Hawks, Spurs lose

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Chris Mullin scored 17 of his 20 points in the third quarter, then watched from the bench as the Indiana Pacers got their final 12 points from the foul line in a 99-92 victory over the New Jersey Nets on Friday night.

Reggie Miller, who led Indiana with 21 points, made six of the 12 free throws as the Pacers were shut out from the field over the final 4:33.

Rik Smits added 16 points, while Mark Jackson finished with 14 points and 10 assists. Keith Van Horn scored 21. Kerry Kittles added 16 and Sam Cassell had 10 for the Nets before refusing to re-enter the game late in the fourth period.

• **Knicks 109, Hawks 108:** In New York, the Knicks, despite blowing a 14-point fourth quarter lead and having John Starks and Allan Houston each miss a pair of free throws in the final 6.9 seconds, held on to edge Atlanta.

Houston, starting at small forward for the first time this season, finished with 21 points on 7-for-14 shooting. Larry Johnson added 19 points and Starks, making his first start of the season, had 16 points and eight assists.

Steve Smith had 24 points for the Hawks, who had won their three previous and eight of 10.

• **Jazz 91, 76ers 79:** In

Philadelphia, Karl Malone scored 17 of his 23 points in the second half as Utah recovered from a blowout loss to Charlotte with a win over Philadelphia.

Malone, who has led the Jazz in scoring all but seven games this year, took control in the third quarter with 12 points and seven rebounds as the Jazz opened an 11-point lead. He finished with 16 rebounds.

Greg Foster added 10 points and nine rebounds, while Jeff Hornacek and Shandon Anderson scored 11 points each.

Allen Iverson, who has averaged 30 points in the Sixers' last six games, led Philadelphia with 28 points.

• **Magic 102, Trail Blazers 87:** In Orlando, David Benoit came off the bench to replace the injured Nick Anderson and scored 19 points with eight rebounds as Orlando defeated Portland.

Coupled with New Jersey's loss at Indiana, it moved the Magic within a half-game of the Nets for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. Brian Grant led the Trail Blazers with 21 points and 16 rebounds.

Rasheed Wallace added 19 points and Arvydas Sabonis had 16. Benoit filled the offensive void left when Anderson exited the game late in the first quarter with a pulled hamstring.



New York Knicks forward Charles Oakley (R) fouls Atlanta Hawks center Dikembe Mutombo as he charges toward the basket in the first quarter of their NBA game on in New York's Madison Square Garden (Reuters photo)

Anderson said he will be available for Sunday's game against Golden State.

• **Heat 93, Warriors 87:** In Miami, Alonzo Mourning had 25 points, 13 rebounds and five blocks as Miami held off upset-minded Golden State. Miami had a 15-point lead early in the game, but the Warriors stayed in it right to the end.

A dunk by Jason Caffey, who had 20 points, pulled the Warriors to 81-80 with 4:18 to play, but Tim Hardaway found Dan Majerle open at the top of the key for a 3-pointer.

A basket by Jimmy Jackson with 2:46 left made it a two-point game, but Hardaway hit a 3 to give the Heat an 87-82 advantage.

Voshon Lenard had 21 points and Hardaway added 17 for Miami.

• **Pistons 105, Raptors 99:** In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Brian Williams had 24 points and 18 rebounds and Grant Hill added 25 points to lead Detroit over Toronto.

Chauncey Billups led Toronto with 22, and Doug Christie added 19.

The Pistons ended a two-game home losing

streak, while Toronto fell to 9-24 on the road. Toronto went on a late 10-1 run, capped by Christie's 3-pointer that made it 101-99 with 1:31 left.

A jumper by Hill moved the margin back to four, and Toronto wasn't able to hit the 3-pointer it needed.

• **Bulls 98, Grizzlies 92:** In Chicago, the Bulls exerted as little energy as they had to and still managed to get the job done, beating Vancouver in a game that wasn't nearly as close as the final score made it appear.

Chicago (50-17) clinched a playoff spot with the victory, becoming the first Eastern Conference team to do so.

Jordan led the Bulls with 24 points despite not scoring in the first quarter. Toni Kukoc had 16 and Scottie Pippen and Steve Kerr each had 13.

Bryant Reeves led the Grizzlies with 30 points, and Shareef Abdur-Rahim added 21.

• **Timberwolves 104, Nuggets 88:** In Minneapolis, Kevin Garnett had 16 points and 11 rebounds, and Minnesota held Denver to eight points in the third

quarter. Terry Porter and Tom Hammonds scored 16 points each off the bench for the Wolves, who snapped a four-game losing streak and crept back over the .500 mark at 34-33.

Minnesota, which had lost seven of its previous nine games, has not been below .500 since Dec. 26, when it was 13-14.

Danny Fortson had 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Nuggets, who have lost two straight after winning three of four.

• **Hornets 92, Spurs 82:** In San Antonio, Bobby Phillips scored 21 points to lead Charlotte to its third straight victory. Matt Geiger and David Wesley added 18 points apiece for Charlotte, which has won 13 of its last 14 games.

San Antonio, which had a two-game winning streak snapped, was led by Tim Duncan with 25 points and 12 rebounds.

Charlotte began the third quarter with a 17-8 run to open its largest lead of the game, 68-51.

The Spurs narrowed the gap to six points, 81-75, on a 3-point field goal by Jaren Jackson with 5:31 to play, but Charlotte answered with a 7-3 run.

NBA STANDINGS

By The Associated Press

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlantic Division				
Miami	47	21	.691	
New York	37	30	.552	9 1/2
New Jersey	35	33	.515	12
Orlando	34	33	.507	12 1/2
Washington	34	33	.507	12 1/2
Boston	29	37	.439	17
Philadelphia	25	41	.379	21

	W	L	Pct	GB
Central Division				
Chicago	50	17	.746	
Indiana	47	20	.701	3
Charlotte	43	24	.642	7
Atlanta	40	26	.606	9 1/2
Cleveland	36	30	.545	13 1/2
Detroit	31	36	.463	19
Milwaukee	29	37	.439	20 1/2
Toronto	15	51	.227	34 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Midwest Division				
Utah	49	17	.742	
San Antonio	45	22	.672	4 1/2
Houston	35	31	.530	14
Minnesota	34	33	.507	15 1/2
Dallas	16	51	.239	33 1/2
Vancouver	15	51	.227	34
Denver	8	61	.116	42 1/2

	W	L	Pct	GB
Pacific Division				
Seattle	50	16	.758	
L.A. Lakers	47	19	.712	3
Phoenix	44	22	.667	6
Portland	37	29	.561	13
Sacramento	26	42	.382	25
L.A. Clippers	15	51	.227	35
Golden State	14	53	.209	36 1/2

x-clinched playoff berth

O'Sullivan takes cross country gold

MARRAKESH (AFP) — Ireland's Sonia O'Sullivan beat Briton Paula Radcliffe in a sprint finish to claim the gold medal on Saturday at the IAAF World Cross Country Championships.

O'Sullivan claimed first in the 8km race in 25mins 39secs, three seconds ahead of Radcliffe who was runner-up for the second straight year.

Ethiopian Gete Wami, the winner in 1996, finished in third.

"I had a few difficult moments but I felt really good over the final lap," said the Irish runner.

"As for running again tomorrow I will

decide later," said O'Sullivan, who collected 40,000 dollars for Saturday's success. In the men's race it was a Kenyan clean sweep. In fact so dominant were the Kenyans they filled the first five places.

John Kibowen took the gold in 10mins 43seconds, with Daniel Komen second three seconds behind. Paul Kosgei was third, a further four seconds adrift of Kibowen.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TANNAN HARRIS

SPOT THE WINNING LINE

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH		EAST	
♠ 5	♠ 10	♠ 10	♠ 10
♥ 10	♥ 10	♥ 10	♥ 10
♦ 10	♦ 10	♦ 10	♦ 10
♣ 10	♣ 10	♣ 10	♣ 10

The bidding: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
10 Pass 40 Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠

Spot cards can make an enormous difference in the play. South's North's win of diamonds with East's seven and, with best defense, this contract would have no play. Declarer made the most of dummy's previous asset to land the heart sum.

North's leap to four hearts was a two-way action. With good five-card trump support, it was unlikely that the contract could be badly hurt, if

at all. And if the game were to fail, the four-level bid would make it difficult for the opponents to find a playable spot of their own.

The contract was certainly reasonable. It seemed to depend only on finding East with the ace of spades or the king of diamonds, but West's takeout double was a clear warning that both those cards were probably offside. But as long as trump was 2-1, South demonstrated that the contract could be made on any lie of the cards.

The opening club lead was won in dummy with the ace and a club was ruffed. Declarer crossed to dummy with a trump to ruff the last club high, and a trump to the table set the stage for the final discomfit.

Declarer led a diamond and simply covered whatever card East played. West could win but was trapped in an endplay. The defender either had to lead a diamond into declarer's tenace or a spade away from the ace, while a club would allow declarer to discard a loser from dummy, while trumping with the last heart in hand. But if East held the nine of diamonds rather than the seven, East could have

trumped that card on the diamond lead and careful defense thereafter would have prevented West from being endplayed.

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Guerrillas say they won't patrol Lebanon border if Israel withdraws

BEIRUT (AP) — Hizbollah's leader said Saturday his guerrillas will not take over security along the Lebanese-Israeli border if Israel's army leaves the occupation zone it started carving into Lebanon 20 years ago.

Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah's comments were the closest he has come to addressing Israeli fears that an Israeli troop withdrawal from southern Lebanon would bring the guerrilla threat closer to the border. His remarks coincided with increasing talk of an Israeli withdrawal, including U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's discussions with Lebanese leaders in Beirut.

"It is a matter for the [Lebanese] authorities whether to send their forces, be it the army or the Internal Security Forces. They are welcome," Sheikh Nasrallah said in an interview with the Voice of Lebanon radio station.

"Hizbollah will not exercise any security authority or role of this kind in the areas that the occupiers leave," the Shiite Muslim cleric said.

Hizbollah, or Party of God, has been fighting 1,500 Israeli soldiers and 2,500 allied militiamen of the South Lebanon Army in the enclave.

Israel first invaded Lebanon in 1978 to push back Palestinian guerrillas, then

returned in 1982 to again rout the Palestinians, only to bog down in battles with Lebanese guerrillas — primarily Hizbollah. Israel's self-described "security zone" in southern Lebanon expanded to nearly one-tenth of the country.

Hizbollah had long refused to say what it would do if the Israelis leave Lebanon. But, recently, the guerrilla group said it would not oppose a Lebanese army deployment in the border zone if the Israelis leave.

Also on Saturday, a Sudanese newspaper quoted Sheikh Nasrallah as saying his fighters would not become a "border guard" for Israel.

"No one in Lebanon is concerned with giving guarantees to the enemy, because no one in Lebanon will accept that the Lebanese people or the Lebanese army be a guard for the borders of an aggressor state," Sudan's Al Anba newspaper quoted Sheikh Nasrallah as saying.

The Hizbollah leader also said Israel's army must leave Lebanon without prior conditions, according to Al Anba.

Israel recently offered a conditional withdrawal from Lebanon. It demanded the dismantlement of Hizbollah and security arrangements to protect northern Israeli towns from cross-border attacks.

Beirut and Syria, the principal power-broker in Lebanon, have refused the Israeli feelers, saying Resolution 425 calls for unconditional Israeli withdrawal without any negotiation or pre-conditions.

Israel also seeks guarantees of protection for Lebanese militiamen who have been armed and trained by Israel in the border zone.

Lebanon and Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon, have rejected the Israeli offer. They demanded an unconditional Israeli withdrawal.

In the interview with Voice

of Lebanon, Sheikh Nasrallah repeated an offer of amnesty to Israeli-allied militiamen who surrender before an Israeli withdrawal takes place. Beirut has been prosecuting members of the SLA militia as traitors. In 1996, a military court sentenced SLA commander Gen. Antoine Lahd to death in absentia for treason.

Top French envoy meets Hizbollah leader

BEIRUT (AFP) — A top envoy sent by the French government, General Jean Susini, met Friday with the secretary general of the Muslim Shiite Hizbollah, the official Lebanese news agency ANI reported.

Mr. Susini has been in Lebanon for a week to establish contacts with various political leaders here, according to informed sources.

He has met with the commander of the Lebanese army, Commander General Emile Lahud, as well as the spiritual leader of Lebanese Shiite Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, the sources said.

France has said on several occasions that it is disposed to provide help "if all parties ask for it" in applying any eventual accord on an Israeli pullback from southern Lebanon in conformance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 425.

Israel has said it is ready to apply the 20-year-old U.N. resolution on withdrawing its forces from southern Lebanon, but on condition Beirut agrees to security arrangements to protect northern Israel from attacks by activists.

Beirut and Syria, the principal power-broker in Lebanon, have refused the Israeli feelers, saying Resolution 425 calls for unconditional Israeli withdrawal without any negotiation or pre-conditions.



ANCIENT FESTIVITIES REVIVED: Uzbek dancers perform as fireworks light up during the spring holiday of Navruz on Saturday. The Navruz festival which celebrates the new year in the ancient Zoroastrian religion that preceded Islam, has been taken up as an official holiday by leaders anxious to establish a sense of nationhood in the ethnically complex young states left by the Soviet collapse (Reuters photo)

Israel's Barak opposes total withdrawal from Golan

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Ehud Barak, leader of Israel's main opposition party, said Saturday he opposes a total retreat from the Golan Heights — occupied in 1967 illegally annexed in 1981.

The Labour Party leader and former military chief of staff "ruled out Syria recovering the eastern shore of Lake Kinneret," also known as the Sea of Galilee, at the foot of the strategic plateau, whose return Syria demands.

Mr. Barak, who served in the cabinet of the 1995-96

Labour government, said: "We never agreed with the Syrians on a total withdrawal contrary to what they maintain."

However, he reiterated that "the farther the Syrians go down the path to peace, the farther Israel will withdraw," according to the formula of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated in 1995.

Mr. Barak also called for a resumption of Israeli-Syrian peace talks at the point where they were broken off more than two years ago. Damascus

says it wants the talks to resume where they left off — saying that includes an Israeli agreement to give back the Golan.

In addition, Syrian Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam said in January that Rabin had also agreed to a U.S. proposal for a complete Israeli pullback from the Golan, accompanied by security arrangements.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he wants to negotiate without preconditions.

Annan receives Egyptian petition to lift Iraq sanctions

CAIRO (AFP) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on Friday received petitions signed by 18 million Egyptians calling for lifting of sanctions against Baghdad and expressing concern for Iraqi children.

The head of the petition campaign, Soheir Al Sokkari told AFP she handed the signatures over to Mr. Annan before he left Cairo for Beirut Friday morning.

Ms. Sokkari, president of the Arab-American Women's Friendship Association, said the petition was signed by "ordinary Egyptian citizens, union members, and the representatives of different universities and Egyptian associations."

She said that the U.N. chief "expressed his surprise at the enormous quantity of signatures collected."

The campaign was launched at the end of December in various Egyptian institutions with the goal of collecting one million signatures.

Mr. Annan defused a crisis between the United Nations and Iraq over U.N. weapons inspections last month.

Turkish government urges calm in crisis with military

ANKARA (R) — A senior Turkish government official on Saturday urged dialogue to ease off a power struggle with the influential military that has shaken the minority coalition.

"From time to time in democracies there can be differences of opinion and approach between state institutions. It's important to try to smooth out these differences through dialogue instead of argument," Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit told a news conference.

The military released a statement on Friday that accused Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz of undermining its campaign against what it sees as an Islamist threat to secular Turkey.

"Nobody, whatever their position, can make suggestions that will cast doubt on, overshadow and weaken the Turkish armed forces' struggle against separatism and Islamic activism," it said.

However, Mr. Ecevit predicted the latest row would be smoothed over at talks between the civilians and soldiers, set for March 27.

"I believe the mutual doubts and misunderstandings will be cleared up by openly discussing them at the national security council meeting next week," he said.

Mr. Yilmaz, leading cabinet members and the top brass all sit on the council.

Mr. Yilmaz, a secularist conservative, has angered the generals by accusing them of using a fight against Islamist activism for personal political gain.

The prime minister is not seen as presenting anything like the threat to Turkey's official secular order as the former Islamist prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan, thrown out of parliament by the constitutional court in January.

But the Sabah newspaper on Saturday quoted an unnamed, high-ranking officer as saying the army hoped Mr. Yilmaz would quit.

The government should resign. In its place a technocratic government to take the country to elections should be formed," the officer said. Polls are not due until the year 2000.

The army, which staged three coups since 1960, traditionally plays a leading role in politics. It is the only real state authority in a large chunk of eastern Turkey where troops are fighting Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels.

The PKK's leading field commander has surrendered to an Iraqi Kurdish faction allied to Turkey, a Brussels-based group close to the rebels said on Saturday.

"We can confirm Semdin Sakik defected three to four days ago," a spokeswoman for the Kurdistan committee told Reuters by telephone from Belgium.

Mr. Yilmaz has been battered in recent weeks by a nasty row with Germany over Turkey's failure to qualify as a candidate for European Union membership and rumours of early polls.

A left-wing opposition

leader who has so far supported the government said on Friday that Mr. Yilmaz's days were numbered.

Mr. Yilmaz vowed not to cede authority to the generals. "I am not going to hand over the responsibility given to me by parliament. I am going to act as a prime minister should," he told private ATV television after the army statement.

Analysts say that by standing up to the soldiers Mr. Yilmaz may be making a play for conservative Muslim votes at any early polls. "Our government's approach is that sincere Muslims, those who do not abuse religion for political purposes, should not be hurt," he said. Mr. Yilmaz defied the generals this month by relaxing a ban on Islamic-style headscarves in classrooms.

Thousands of students have taken to the streets of Istanbul to protest at the ban. Secularist dress restraints in public life are a throwback to the 1920s when Kemal Ataturk, a former military man, instigated wide-ranging pro-Western reforms.

Mr. Yilmaz is due to hold talks with his coalition partners on Sunday to plan strategy ahead of the March 27 security council meeting.

One of the government allies, Husamettin Cindoruk, distanced himself from recent Yilmaz retorts against the army. "The prime minister's comments do not bind the government. They are personal remarks," Milliyet newspaper quoted Mr. Cindoruk as saying.

Mr. Yilmaz has been battered in recent weeks by a nasty row with Germany over Turkey's failure to qualify as a candidate for European Union membership and rumours of early polls.

A left-wing opposition

Israeli deputy calls for attacking Syrian troops in Lebanon

TELL AVIV (AFP) — Right-wing Israeli member of parliament Uzi Landau called Saturday for attacks against Syrian troops in retaliation for operations against Israeli soldiers in south Lebanon.

"If Israeli soldiers are killed in Lebanon, there is no reason why Syrian soldiers shouldn't go home in coffins," Mr. Landau, who chairs the parliament's defence and foreign affairs committee, said on Israel Radio.

"We must change the rules of the game in Lebanon and

make the Syrians understand that they have to pay a price for attacks on our forces or on northern Israel," said the MP, who belongs to the Likud Party of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"If Syria indeed controls Lebanon, as we say, it should be held accountable for operations by Hizbollah, which it supports," Mr. Landau said.

The Shiite Muslim militia carries out most of the attacks on Israeli troops in the Jewish state's south Lebanon self-declared buffer zone, set up to

protect northern Israel from cross-border attacks.

Mr. Landau, who is not in a position to make such a decision, said the change in strategy should occur before any Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.

Mr. Netanyahu and the majority of the members of his so-called "security cabinet" backed proposals Friday conditioning any pullback on security guarantees. Some 35,000 Syrian soldiers are stationed across two-thirds of Lebanon.

Egyptian court dismisses lawsuit over missing Libyan dissident

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian court on Saturday dismissed a lawsuit into the disappearance from a Cairo hotel four years ago of a senior Libyan dissident saying there was no proof of any foul play.

After eight hearings, the south Cairo compensation court threw out the suit filed in November 1996 by Baha Amri, whose husband, Mansur Al Kikhiya, disappeared from his Cairo hotel in December 1993.

Ms. Amri filed the suit demanding symbolic compensation

from former Egyptian Interior Minister Hassan Al Ali, accusing his ministry of negligence leading to the disappearance of her husband.

But the court said she "never presented any proof that a crime had been committed," its only reference to the wrongdoing mentioned in the lawsuit she filed.

The court also absolved the interior ministry and Mr. Ali of any negligence.

"All the investigations and documents do not indicate that any crime was committed

against Kikhiya," the court said.

In September 1997, the Washington Post, quoting U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reports, said Kikhiya was abducted by Egyptian secret service agents and handed over to authorities in Libya where he allegedly was executed on the orders of Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi. Egypt and Libya denied the report, which created tensions in relations between Cairo and Washington. Kikhiya served as foreign minister under Colonel Qadhafi from 1972 until 1975.

Every self-respecting house will also lay out on a cloth or carpet the "haft-sin" or "seven S's," a collection of objects which for the most part begin with the letter S in Farsi. Favorites are green shoots, apples, flowers and a red fish in a bowl, all representing life and vitality.

Islam has contributed only a few rites to the Noruz celebration, whose many rituals of purification, both internal and external, hark back to Persia's first religion: Zoroastrianism.

Noruz is a time to forgive quar-

rels, ask pardons, and start life again as nature does each spring. In the runup to Noruz, Iranians prepare for the new year with a "festival of fire," jumping over a small flame to leave the ills of the old year behind.

As they pass over the fire, they incant an age-old wish, that the fire take on their yellow colour, the colour of sickness, and give them its red colour, the colour of health, in exchange.

The ritual internal cleansing is accompanied by a week of intense

house cleaning in homes across the country, as carpets and curtains are beaten and washed.

On the thirteenth and final day of the celebration, almost every Iranian will leave his newly cleaned house to have a picnic on the banks of a river or stream, a nod to another of the Zoroastrian elements, water. The celebration is a boon to shopkeepers as the country engages in a frenzy of present shopping and travel for the holidays. All hotels in Iran are fully booked and air and plane tickets sold out.

ATLANTA (R) — An inmate who got stuck in a drainage pipe as he tried to escape from the U.S. penitentiary in Atlanta was sentenced to an additional three years and eight months in prison. A federal jury convicted Robert Poole on Jan. 8 of attempting to escape Sept. 20, 1996. "An employee of the institution heard Poole call for help because his body was stuck in a sewer drain," the U.S. attorney's office said in a statement. When prison guards freed Poole, they found a laundry bag containing a home-made shovel and other personal items.

by Christophe de Roquefeuil
Agence France Presse

TEHRAN — Iran, best known as an Islamist state, started its new calendar year Saturday by reaching back to its earliest Zoroastrian traditions with the festival of Noruz.

The country moved into the Iranian year of 1377 just before midnight Friday local time.

The date marks the anniversary of the Prophet Mohammad's flight from Mecca to Medina as calculated by Iran's solar calendar and, as

since time immemorial here, the start of spring and another new year.

For the next 13 days, Iranians will celebrate Noruz, or "new day," with rites which date back almost 3,000 years to ancient Persia's origins and which have survived countless social revolutions since, notably the Muslim invasion of Persia in the seventh century.

The festival is a family occasion that plunges official Iran into quasi-lethargy and empties Tehran's usually traffic-jammed boulevards.

Newspapers will stop appearing and radio and television will offer minimum broadcasting.

As the hustle and bustle of modern life fades into the background, Iranians will start the new year by paying visits to their elders.

Young people will take their parents and grandparents cookies and sweets, while children receive small gifts of brand-new banknotes. Enough new banknotes are distributed that Tehran's banks are stripped of them long before the holidays begin.

Noruz is a time to forgive quar-

5,000 squealing fans turn out to see DiCaprio

LONDON (AP) — Thousands of squealing teenage fans turned out to see Leonardo DiCaprio and his co-stars at the London premiere of "The Man in the Iron Mask." About 5,000 people, mainly teen-age girls, had waited for six hours, and were pressed against crowd barriers outside the theatre. "This publicity trip has been like doing a Rolling Stones tour," said co-star Gabriel Byrne. "I don't envy him this at all," said actor Jeremy Irons. "Leonardo doesn't like that sort of attention. It gets in the way of work," he said. "In life he's a very humble, normal guy." Screams of adulation could be heard even inside the cinema.

'Titanic' is 'biggest disaster' in war against teenage tobacco use

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — "Titanic" is the biggest box-office hit in history, but the American Lung Association says the Oscar-nominated film sets a bad example because Kate Winslet lights a cigarette in an act of rebellion. In its annual "Hackademy Awards," the association commended "As Good As It Gets" because its heroine asks a friend not to smoke in front of her asthmatic son. But, citing a scene where Winslet's character Rose lights up a cigarette, the lung association branded "Titanic" as "the biggest disaster in the war against teenage tobacco use."

Elton John asked to return stolen Roman art

LONDON (AFP) — Veteran pop singer Elton John has been asked to return a piece of an ancient Roman sarcophagus which he bought at an auction after it was found to have been stolen, a report said. John bought the third century piece at Sotheby's in London four years ago for around \$13,000 believing its provenance to be sound. The Independent newspaper said. But late last year the auction house discovered the piece had been stolen and the sale was not lawful, according to the paper. The Independent reported that Sotheby's was now searching for an alternative to present to John. It was not known from whom or where the piece was taken.

Tanya is lucky name for Russian rockets

MOSCOW (R) — At least three people at Russia's northern Plesetsk cosmodrome are in charge of making sure the name "Tanya" is written on every rocket they launch. ITAR-TASS news agency reported. It quoted sources at the cosmodrome as saying it was widely believed by workers that a Vostok-2M space rocket exploded on the launch pad 18 years ago, killing 48 people, only because someone forgot to write the lucky name on it. "The reasons have never been found. That is why people working at the cosmodrome, as superstitious as cosmonauts, think the main reason was the lack of the traditionally lucky name "Tanya," TASS reported.

More time for convict whose escape went down drain

ATLANTA (R) — An inmate who got stuck in a drainage pipe as he tried to escape from the U.S. penitentiary in Atlanta was sentenced to an additional three years and eight months in prison. A federal jury convicted Robert Poole on Jan. 8 of attempting to escape Sept. 20, 1996. "An employee of the institution heard Poole call for help because his body was stuck in a sewer drain," the U.S. attorney's office said in a statement. When prison guards freed Poole, they found a laundry bag containing a home-made shovel and other personal items.

Bahrain flies in aid for

CAIRO (AFP) — A Bahraini plane flew into the Egyptian capital on Saturday to deliver humanitarian aid to the victims of the recent earthquake in the north-eastern province of Ismailia. The plane was carrying medical supplies, food and clothing. The aid was being distributed to the victims of the earthquake, which killed at least 100 people and injured hundreds more. The earthquake occurred on March 18, 1998, and was the deadliest in the region in decades.

Number 6793

Butler hailed

CAIRO (R) — U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, James Butler, was hailed for his efforts in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East. Butler was praised for his work in facilitating dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian leadership, and for his commitment to the peace process. His tenure in Cairo has been marked by a series of high-profile visits and meetings, and he is widely respected for his diplomatic skills and leadership.

Butler's appointment as Ambassador to Egypt was seen as a significant step in strengthening U.S. ties with the country. He is expected to continue his efforts to promote peace and stability in the region, and to support the development of Egypt's economy and infrastructure. His work in Cairo has been a testament to his dedication to the U.S. mission in the Middle East.

Man holds

CAIRO (R) — A man was held by Egyptian security forces on Saturday after being accused of holding a meeting with members of the Islamic Front, a militant group. The man was arrested in the city of Alexandria, and is being held in custody. The Islamic Front has been active in the region, and its activities have been a source of concern for the Egyptian government. The arrest is part of a series of operations aimed at dismantling the group and its network.

Israel wants U.N. to

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's foreign ministry is urging the United Nations to take action against the Syrian army's presence in Lebanon. The ministry is calling for a UN resolution that would demand the withdrawal of Syrian forces from the country. The Syrian army's presence in Lebanon has been a major source of tension in the region, and Israel has long been concerned about its impact on the peace process. The ministry's appeal is part of a broader effort to isolate Syria and bring about a change in its policy towards Lebanon.

Israel remains st

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's foreign ministry is warning that the Syrian army's presence in Lebanon remains a major obstacle to the peace process. The ministry is calling for a UN resolution that would demand the withdrawal of Syrian forces from the country. The Syrian army's presence in Lebanon has been a major source of tension in the region, and Israel has long been concerned about its impact on the peace process. The ministry's warning is part of a broader effort to isolate Syria and bring about a change in its policy towards Lebanon.